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Protracted displacement, static spaceplaces and solutions to displacement:

Listening to displaced persons (refugees and IDPS)
in Ghana and Sri Lanka

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'The place your parents come from and where you
were born is your home. If you get used to a place, it
can also be your home' (Liberian Refugee Youth, grown
up on the camp, 2007)

'Home is where you are'
        Gaasbeek, T., 2010

Dedication

To all those persons, who given the right conditions, can make and feel at home *anyplace* in the world, be it original or new. This work is dedicated to the so-called displaced persons who are individual humans, after all, like everybody else.

To the memories of my dear Mum, Leticia A. A. Tete, whose legacy lives on and Dad, M. K. T. Tete, Nkpe *dze ene le. Me na ene nkpe paa.*

Abstract

This thesis studies the extent of displaced persons' inclusion in, and policy articulations about, resolving their protracted displacement. Specifically, it explores the perceptions of displaced persons in Ghana and Sri Lanka (Liberian refugees and Tamil IDPs) respectively about the solutions they consider viable in addressing their protracted displacement. It examines some policy articulations and practices around displaced persons' inclusion, and the ways in which these enable and/or constrain the latter. It also assesses the ways in which humanitarian interventions are addressing (or not) the concerns of displaced persons. Though not dealt with on a comparative basis, both displacement situations have offered complementary and contrasting insights into practices around the search for solutions, and the extent of inclusion of displaced persons' views.

A qualitative method of enquiry is employed as a means of studying the subjective perceptions of different actors. It draws on a range of short- to long-term ethnographic engagements with Liberian refugees in the Gomao-Buduburam camp in Ghana and Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri Lanka. Various approaches to ethnography, mainly narratives or life histories, combined with in-depth interviews, observations, focus group discussions, informal conversations, photographs and extensive secondary literature searches; have helped research the issues of concern. A consideration of the methods employed, as well as the experiences and challenges of researching these situations, have provided a particularly useful lens through which to reflect on issues of power, positionality, rigour and the emotions associated with research in such contexts.

Eclectic theoretical and conceptual insights are drawn from actor-oriented perspectives and the socio-spatial production of space. They have helped research certain constructions around territory, nation-state and home in the context of displaced persons' rights. Consequently, essentialist assumptions about space/place, territory, nation-state and home; and a particular reading of the principle of the right to return, underpinning the emphasis on return or repatriation as the best solution to displacement, are explored. Studying representations, practices around and responses to displacement, has afforded insights into various ways in which space is reproduced and contested by various actors – *viz* local/international implementers and displaced persons themselves - in the search for solutions. Certain ways in which socio-spatial space tends to be perceived, conceived and practiced by various actors to the exclusion of other spaces are then highlighted.

Whilst there are numerous expressions of socio-spatial space, territorial state space tends to dominate the ways in which space is produced to the exception of other spaces. Yet, reality and displaced persons seem to context the sedentary model upon which displacement policy is constructed by states and formalized in rights such as the

right to return and voluntary repatriation in the search for solutions to protracted displacement. Protractedness would also seem to be one such construction of this model. This is a model which conflates home with an essentialised nation-state or place of origin that confers rights. It thus insists on people having to return to their places (even in the face of insecurity) or to go back to their rooted home for their lives to be normal. This remains the case despite the fact that displaced persons repeatedly demonstrate their ability to resiliently and ingeniously adapt to conditions in various homes and to engage in the process of making their lives elsewhere; even as they may aspire to returning home. The need to transcend essentialised ideas about home as roots and routes per se in the reasons informing displaced persons' choice(s) of solution has thus been argued for.

An attention to more progressive imaginations of spaceplace and the ontological security concerns of displaced persons have then helped to reflect on displaced persons' ambivalences about home and their views as to the solution(s) which may be viable.

Actor-oriented perspectives have helped to reiterate that displaced persons, like all social actors, are heterogeneous and capable social agents who actively engage with the strictures imposed by their displacement. It is argued that displaced persons' rights and participation need not merely be theoretically important. Rather, they could be afforded the space to participate as right holders in concert with duty-bearers to ensure the respect of their rights as elaborately outlined in various instruments purported to be protecting their interests. Such a constructionist view of agency has emphasised the need for displaced persons to be an active part of the search for and implementation of solutions to their displacement. To this end, rights are viewed as a means of enabling meaningful participation within the politico-socio-economic constraints imposed by displacement and attendant issues.

Rather than reifying displaced persons' perceptions as if it was all that mattered, this perspective has offered a useful way of negotiating, to various degrees, the romanticized fixity and flow or the duality of bounded structure and unbounded agency often associated with ideas about spaceplace, territory, nation-state and home; ideas which have so much salience in the policy practices deployed in search of solutions to displacement. A brief discussion of policy narratives in the implementation of humanitarian policies has helped to make explicit the story-telling dynamics of policy implementation and the extent of displaced persons' inclusion in policy practices aimed at addressing their displacement.

Observations about the multiplicity and variability of home as becoming through what we do in, with and through them; has led to the conclusion that home need not necessarily be a rooted spaceplace of origin, rather it can be constructed *any place*. It is argued that this need not work against peoples' ambivalences about a home to which one (non) nostalgically returns. Consequently, a case is made for embedding the voices of displaced persons affected by humanitarian policies and practices into

displacement resolution interventions. Doing so in attempts at resolving their protracted displacement, may lead to better informed and more contextually relevant interventions.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

APPENDICES

List of Acronyms

ACS - American Colonisation Society

AFL - Armed forces of Liberia

AGREDS - Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services

AI - Amnesty International

AICC - Accra International Conference Centre

AU – African Union

Brookings-Bern - the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

CBOs - Community Based Organisations

CCG - Christian Council of Ghana

GRC - Ghana Red Cross

DS - District Secretariat

ECOMOG - ECOWAS Monitoring Group

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West Africa States

FAO - Food and Agricultural Organization

FDL - Forward Defence Line

GoG - Government of Ghana

GoSL - Government of Sri Lanka

GPs - UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

GRB- Ghana Refugee Board

GRC - Ghana Red Cross

IASC - Inter Agency Standing Committee

ICG - International Crisis Group

ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross

IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons

IFI - International Funding Institutions

IHL - International Humanitarian Law

INGOs -International Non-Governmental Organizations

IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks

LH – Life History

LI - Local or Re- integration in the 1st country of asylum

l-NGOs - local Non-Governmental Organisations

LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MOU - Memorandum of Understanding

NCS - National Catholic Secretariat

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NPFL - National Patriotic Front of Liberia

NRC – Norwegian Research Council

OAU – Organisation of African Unity

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OPE – Overseas Processing Entity

PD –Protracted Displacement

PDS – Protracted Displacement Situations

PRS – Protracted Refugee Situations

RV - Relocation Villages

SLA - Sri Lankan Army

TWP - True Whig party

UCSCRI - U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations Children Fund

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency

VR - Voluntary Repatriation to the country or place of origin

WC - Welfare Centre

WFP - World Food Programme

WHO - World Health Organization

WISE - Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment

WRS - World Refugee Survey

WW1- First World War

Introduction

General Introduction

This thesis explores the extent of displaced persons' inclusion in, and policy

articulations about, resolving their protracted displacement (PD)[i]. In 2004 I studied

how Liberian refugee women and children were coping with their years of

displacement in Ghana. I qualitatively examined various strategies they were

employing, emphasising their security and educational concerns and also explored

their concerns about solutions to their displacement (Tete 2010 [2005]). Whereas the

previous work studied displacement narratives of women and children with a focus on

their coping strategies, the present study builds on findings that highlighted disjoints

between refugees' preferences and policy articulations about solutions to their

protracted displacement. These disjoints required further exploration.

In 2007, I was invited onto the 'bridging the knowledge –action gap project'. Among

others, it sought to examine how the voices of affected people could be heard and

inform policy practices; and how disparate knowledges could be understood and

integrated. Due to the project's focus on post-crisis recovery, with particular reference

to Sri Lanka, the latter was the research area[ii]. After an initial exploratory field visit

however, a continued focus on Sri Lanka was rendered impossible by the ongoing

conflict situation, especially in Vavuniya where fieldwork was conducted. Here,

perceptions of Tamil Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) about solutions implemented

in the face of ongoing conflict were explored. The research project had to be

refocused. The current study thus focuses mainly on the views of Liberian refugees in

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

the Gomoa-Buduram camp in Ghana and partly on that of Tamil IDPs in Sri Lanka. Though not dealt with on a comparative basis, both displacement situations offer complementary and contrasting insights into practices around the search for solutions, especially the emphasis on the principle of the right to return, and the inclusion of displaced persons' views.

Eclectic theoretical insights are drawn from actor-oriented perspectives and the socio-spatial production of space. This is to help research on displaced persons' perceptions and policy articulations about solutions implemented on their behalf. They also help examine certain constructions around territory, nation-state and home in the context of displaced persons' rights. Consequently, essentialist assumptions about space/place, territory, nation-state and home; and a particular reading of the principle of the right to return, underpinning the emphasis on return or repatriation as the best solution to displacement, are explored. Studying representations, practices around and responses to so-called solutions to displacement, affords insights into various ways in which space is reproduced and contested by various actors – *viz* local/international implementers and displaced persons themselves - in the search for solutions. Policy narratives are conceptually useful in examining the extent of inclusion of displaced persons in such policy practices.

It is understood that all social actors dispose of a degree of manoeuvre within the physical, social, political and economic strictures imposed on them. There is thus a need to illuminate displacement resolution discourses with the voices and perceptions of displaced persons. To this end, a qualitative method of enquiry is employed in this

study. Importantly, an embedding of and a more sustained attention to the voices of

displaced persons, it is proposed, might contribute to the search for solutions to *their*

protracted displacement.

Objectives and Research Questions

Informed by such actor-oriented perspectives, this study generally explores

perceptions of displaced persons about, as well as policy practices and constructions

around, their inclusion in the solutions implemented on their behalf. Specifically, the

study aims to:

- Explore the current concerns of displaced persons in Ghana and Sri Lanka

  (Liberian refugees and Tamil IDPs) respectively with respect to the solutions

  they consider viable in addressing their protracted displacement.

- Examine the policy articulations and practices around displaced persons'

  inclusion and the ways in which these enable and/or constrain the displaced.

- Assess the ways in which humanitarian interventions are addressing (or not)

  the concerns of displaced persons.

Research Questions

- What are the views of the displaced about the solution to their displacement

  and how are their concerns being matched with policy preferences?

- What are some policy articulations around solutions to displacement and what

  pertains with respect to 'the right to return' for displaced persons?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

- How are concerns and rights of the displaced being addressed in a way that is sensitive to their needs whilst satisfying policy choices?

Much has been written on the displacement experience of refugees in camps and IDPs from the perspective of the displaced themselves (see for example, seminal works by Harrell-Bond 1986; Malkki 1995 a; Hyndman 2000; Hammond 2004; Cohen & Deng 1998 a, b; to mention a few). With respect to Sri Lankan Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, not much has academically been written on the war/post-war situation especially in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri Lanka (but, see De Alwis & Hyndman 2002; Hyndman & De Alwis 2004, 2005; Van Hear & Rajasingham-Senanayake 2006)[iii]. Among other reasons, researchers, like journalists, have been granted limited access (see Olesen 2009:25). Limited knowledge is thus gained from the war and post-war situation in the north-east, especially Vavuniya as an important forward defense line and a major divide between North and South. In that sense, I had a unique (albeit extremely limited) opportunity to observe ways of addressing PDS in the face of war. As I have reiterated, I had to leave due to the ongoing war situation and the impossibility of continuing in the teeth of active warfare; a situation which was not only becoming inimical to my safety, but to that of those who had graciously hosted me (see Tete 2010 [2009]). Important works have however been written from within and without on the situation in the East and North of Vavuniya. A few of these have addressed, *inter alia*, listening to the displaced and action research in the conflict zones of Sri Lanka (Demusz 2000; *cf*. Rajaram 2002); forced migration and changing local political economies in north-western Sri Lanka (Shanmugaratnam 2000); resettlement and return narratives of

Tamil Sri Lankan women in the Northern province of Sri Lanka (Newman 2003); a short history of displacement and resettlement in Sri Lanka (Muggah 2008); protracted internal conflict and the challenges for humanitarian agencies in Trincomalee (Lang & Knudsen 2010); the protection and livelihoods strategies of populations in protracted conflict settings, mainly in the Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka (Nigel 2010; Kalatunga & Lakshman 2010; Korf 2003 a, b ; Goodhand et al 2000; also Korf 2005 on participatory development and violent conflict); the intersection of the tsunami and the conflict that preceded it in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia (Hyndman 2010); the impacts of the 2004 tsunami and policy responses in the Shadow of civil war (Blaikie 2010; also Blaikie & Lund 2010). All of these have been insightful and have also provided important contextual information for the Sri Lankan aspect of the study, which aimed at exploring constructions around, and the inclusion of IDPs in, resolving their protracted displacement.

Whilst Awumbila, Manuh et al (2008) indicate a dearth of research on immigrant and migrant communities in Ghana generally; they make an exception with respect to research on Liberian migrants. In the particular case of Liberian refugees, studies have addressed, Ghana's response to the Liberian and Sahelian refugee influx (Essuman-Johnson 1994); Liberians as reluctant refugees in Ghana (Owusu 2000); the gendered dimensions of the displacement experience (Sefa-Dedeh 1994; Kreitzer 2002; Hargrove 2009); credit schemes, self-reliance and livelihood strategies (Hasci 1994; Dick 2002a, b; Porter *et al* 2008; Omata 2011a); life satisfaction and self-esteem among Liberian refugees in Ghana (Wehljah & Akotia 2004); displacement narratives and 'coping

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

strategies' of Liberian refugee women and children (Tete 2010 [2005]); stressors,

coping strategies and meaning making of Liberian refugees in the camp (Sarfo-Mensah

2009); methodological lessons from research on the camp (Agyeman 2005); the socio-

cultural and economic impact of the refugees on the host community (Boamah-Gyau

2008); the distributional impact of remittances on Liberian refugees in Ghana (Omata

2011b); the host community's perspective of refugee integration in Ghana (Agblorti

2011); the challenges of implementing humanitarian policies in Ghana and Uganda

(Khasalamwa et al 2011); the repression of social protests and the nature of

humanitarian authority in the Buduburam Camp (Holzer 2010); among others. Most of

these studies have, to various degrees, emphasized the importance of refugees'

participation and the inclusion of their voices in displacement policy practices.

Hardgrove (2009) has touched on factors influencing refugee women's perception of

return. However, in the current climate of concerted efforts at resolving the Liberian

refugee problem in Ghana mainly through repatriation, gaps exist as to refugees'

concerns vis-à-vis the implementers' logic of return as the best way of resolving their

protracted displacement situation (PRS). This study also aims at contributing to that

discussion.

Protracted Displacement

It has been called 'warehousing'; 'a de facto *fourth* and an all-too-durable solution'; 'an

intractable state of limbo'; 'a waste of humanity'; and the persons affected by it,

'forgotten populations' (Smith 2004:38; UNHCR 2004:1; Adelman 2008: preface xxii).

These are but a few grim descriptions of Protracted Refugee Situations (PDS) which

6

have become common fare in our era. Though displacement situations are commonly expected to be temporary, they increasingly have a propensity to become intractable and excessively prolonged. Far from the initial flurry of activities that often accompany fresh crisis situations - be it through war or natural disasters, protractedness commonly characterize long-standing displacement situations. These easily become forgotten emergencies where masses of people are left to spend their lives in limbo and to pick up whatever pieces are left, if any. Forced movements both within and across national borders, especially those occasioned by conflicts or wars-induced displacements, continue to be issues of grave concern. Protracted displacement has thus become a spectre of our times and the search for solutions to it, a major preoccupation of the international community.

PRSs are defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as more than 25,000 people in a camp for more than 5 years. As far back as 2004, UNHCR defined a protracted refugee situation as:

> one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance' (UNHCR 2004:1, 2).

To indicate the dimension of the problem, they admit 'using a crude measure of refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in developing countries, and excluding Palestinian refugees who fall under the mandate of UNRWA (UNHCR 2004). In 2008, the UNHCR indicated that PRS are found

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

the world over, with the vast majority in African and Asian countries (UNHCR 2008a, b, c, d).

It is recognized that the five-year cut-off period is arbitrary (Crisp 2003) and the UNCHR admits to the inadequacy of its measure for defining these situations, an inadequacy over which there is widespread agreement (Loescher & Milner 2005; Loescher et al 2008; Adelman 2008). Taking exception to UNHCR's measure, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (UCSCRI) in the World Refugee Survey (WRS) of 2009 defined warehoused refugees as: 'populations of 10,000 or more restricted to camps or segregated settlements or otherwise deprived of rights to freedom of movement or livelihoods …in situations lasting five years or more' (2009:26). These were estimated to be over 8 million (456, 800). Then as now, the majority was found in Africa (excluding North Africa).

In their seminal work on the causes, consequences and implications of PRS, Loescher et al (2008: 3) starkly note: 'over two-thirds of refugees in the world today are not in emergency situations, but instead trapped in PRS'. Whilst not new, PRS have become particularly pronounced in the post-cold war period that has been marked by displacements of various kinds, especially conflict-induced ones. Many of these are in Africa. The UNHCR (2008a) estimates that some six million people (excluding about 4million Palestinian refugees) constitute more than 30 PRS. The overwhelming majority of these situations, according to Loescher et al (2008:3) are not only found in some of the poorest and most unstable regions; they originate from some of the

world's most fragile states, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Liberia, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan'.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, people from 8 countries count among the 2.3 million refugees in PRS. Taking smaller groups who have equally languished in camps and urban areas, this adds people from another 13 countries to the count (Kamara 2009). For instance, the USCRI (2009) reports that there were 71, 100 Liberian refugees, displaced for more than 19 years, in countries like Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana and others.

Particularly in the past decade, and in recognition of the largely negative consequences of such displacement situations, a lot of attention has been focused on the need for appropriate responses and concerted efforts at resolving it. Whether addressing refugee or Internally Displaced Person (IDP) situations, efforts have been directed at dealing with the causes and consequences of forced migration, the promotion of peace-building mechanisms and the implementation of so-called durable solutions. In so doing, the emphasis has been on return or repatriation as the best solution. This reflects a shift in focus from the resettlement or local integration opportunities that were popular in the 70s and 80s. Post cold-war dynamics; powerful geopolitical and states' interests; essentialised ideas about bounded territorial spaces, places, homes and peoples; and a promotion of state-centric views at the expense of displaced persons' own; are some of the reasons cited for such shifts in focus (Chimni 1999; Hyndman 1999; Loescher 2001).

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

The policy emphasis on return or repatriation as the best solutions however, has been criticized for insensitivity to and overlooking the needs and concerns of displaced persons who are its primary actors; and the solutions they might consider appropriate in resolving their displacement. Also, displaced persons languishing in these situations face formidable personal challenges and significant restrictions on a wide range of their rights. Additionally, the continuation of such situations 'frequently give rise to a number of political and security concerns for host states, states in the region' and for the international community as a whole (Loescher et al 2008:3).

Implications of Protracted Displacement Situations

The effects and implications of displaced persons living life in the limbo are numerous: to mention a few, such situations contribute to insecurity at local, national, regional and international levels since camps easily become recruiting grounds for armed elements thus contributing to instability not only in the host state but also across regional borders. For instance as Martin & Shoenholtz posit about our post-September 11 world, 'countries like Afghanistan might provide an extreme example of how prolonged humanitarian emergencies can too easily become breeding grounds for terrorism and repression' (2006:405). Young ones being raised up in the artificial environment of a camp with attendant challenges are expected to return to a homeland or home place they may know very little about (Chimni 2004). The physical and economic insecurities most face in these camps coupled with limited opportunities result in their pursuing other outlets. This, for instance, is witnessed in the supposedly

large numbers of asylum seekers and migrants perceived to be 'trooping' to western

countries, even through illegal channels of smuggling and trafficking organizations

(Loescher & Milner 2005). It is no wonder that concerted efforts - traced back to 2002-

were re-initiated in 2008 by the High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, to

address protracted displacement (see UNHCR 2008b; FMR 2009). It is recognized that

it is imperative for steps to be taken to provide a solution to their plight.

Solutions to Displacement

The UNHCR proposes three traditional solutions as a so-called durable means of

resolving displacement for refugees. These are Return or Voluntary Repatriation (VR)

to the country of origin, Local or Re- integration (LI) in the 1st country of asylum and

Resettlement in a third country of asylum. With slight variations, these three options

are also recommended for IDPs but are supposed to occur within the country of origin.

They are to return voluntarily to their homes or places of habitual residence; be re-

integrated in the places to which they were initially displaced or be resettled in

another part of the country.

Repatriation has increasingly been emphasized as the most desirable solution

particularly in the case of displacement situations in the developing world, especially in

Africa (Bakewell 2002; Crisp 2003). It is interesting to note that 'repatriation is only

mentioned in negative terms in the convention in Article 31 which prohibits expulsion

or forcible return (*refoulement*) of refugees' (Harrell-Bond 1989: 47). The OAU

convention however makes provision for it but emphasizes its voluntary nature (*ibid*.;
Opoku Awuku 1995).

Prior to the late 1980s when the majority of refugees were from the communist
countries, Loescher et al argue that VR was discouraged and where done, refugees
themselves decided when to return and under what conditions'(2003:9). Turton
identifies three –the resettlement, the asylum and containment - phases, that have
marked dominant approaches to and efforts at resolving the refugee problem. In what
he identifies as the first phase or the immediate post-second world war period until
the late 1950s, the focus was on permanent resettlement of refugees from the Eastern
bloc to countries of the West like the US, Canada and Australia. In the second phase
from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, the potential solution for the great majority of
refugees was seen to be LI in the first country of asylum or VR in the country of origin.
Here, most of the refugees were from Africa in large numbers, and the movement was
mostly south-south to other African countries with an open-door policy. From the
1980s onwards, the number of refugees 'of concern'[iv] were said to have greatly
increased leading to a 'refugee crisis'. In this phase, resettlement and LI were
considered to be increasingly problematic. The main causes of war continued to be
internal or intra-state and the preference was thus for VR or what has been termed
containment. This is to prevent flows from occurring in the first place or when they do,
to confine them to their region of origin or take firm measures to ensure return of
refugees to their home states as soon as possible. Here, Western states and
developing states were taking increasingly determined steps to prevent or dissuade

refugees from settling in their territories. Western European countries then

constructed what has been termed 'fortress Europe' in the face of increasing annual

asylum applications; whilst African governments began to retreat from their open door

policy towards refugees from the African continent. Needless to say, many of those

thus contained became internally displaced, re-displaced after return, or for those

who were able to leave, asylum seekers mostly seeking refuge in the West (2002: 33-

36; see also Crisp 2000; Loescher 1993).

As has widely been discussed, this shift in emphasis to repatriation as the best solution

is quite recent and arises in a legal vacuum (Chetail 2004; Zieck 2004; Goodwin-Gill

1989). According to Chetail (2004:11), 'the concept of VR is a creation of UNHCR

practice [and] largely born outside the framework of the refugee convention'. As a

result, Chetail further notes, guidelines on VR are fairly susceptible to 'extra-legal

considerations largely dominated by short-term political constraints rather than pre-

established legal standards' (*ibid.*, p. 18). This explains some of the shifts in UNHCR's

practices around VR.

Some of these shifts have been the varying degrees of emphasis on the balance

between conducive conditions in the country of origin permitting return (objective

criteria) and the voluntariness or the need for repatriation to take place at the freely

expressed will of the refugee (subjective criteria); a change in focus from a relatively

passive facilitation to promotion or the active creation of conditions conducive to the

return of refugees; and a shift to the concept of 'return in safety and dignity' which is

considered to compromise the voluntary nature in favour of the change in

circumstances[v]. As Chetail notes, 'the relationship between the existing standards of

VR and the cessation clauses of the refugee convention remains problematic'

(2004:31).

The OAU Convention makes explicit provision for VR but with the qualification that

refugees return at their freely expressed will. This applies to situations of mass influx.

Chimni (2004) also advises the need for caution in the application of VR since a

corollary of the right to return is the right to leave. It is acknowledged that each VR

operation must respond to the specificities of the case under review and that, there

are a multiplicity of situations necessitating different responses. However, various

precedents have led to the conclusion that VR is the best option for refugees in

situations of mass displacement (UNHCR 2004 [2002]). In the case of IDPs, the need for

them to make an informed choice about the particular solution preferred without

coercion is recognised. They are also to be afforded the opportunity to be full

participants in the planning and management of such a decision (Kälin 2007).

UNHCR recognizes that an important means of achieving results is to pursue various

solutions in a 'comprehensive and complementary' manner, since 'there is no "one-

size-fits-all" solution' to various displacement situations (2008c: 2). It is acknowledged

in theory that 'the real drivers of return and reintegration processes are displaced

persons themselves, who when they consider conditions to be right, will return to their

countries or places of origin' (UNHCR 2008b: 10). Indeed, the agency of displaced

persons in contributing to the search for solutions to their own displacement is long-

recognised in forced migration research (*inter alia*, RPN 1994; Harrell-Bond 1986; Hyndman 2000; Loescher 2001; Harrell-Bond & Voutira 2007; Chimni 2009).

Role of UNHCR in Refugee and IDP Situations

The UNHCR is the international organization charged with responsibility for refugees (UNHCR 1996). They are often invited by and cooperate with host governments to provide protection and material assistance to refugees, as well as solutions to the displacement situation. In human rights parlance, they are moral duty bearers assisting a State which is the legal duty bearer working to ensure the protection of right holders, in this case, displaced persons (see Mikkelsen 2005).

Whilst the UNHCR was set up with an explicit mandate to address refugee issues, it has increasingly taken on responsibility for IDPs in the areas of protection, coordination and management of IDP camps and emergency shelter under the so-called cluster approach (Cohen 2005). Under this approach, a framework for Inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance by key United Nations and non-United Nations partners is specified. Other agencies involved are United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in charge of Early Recovery; Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) in charge of health; World Food Programme (WFP) responsible for logistics and emergency telecommunications; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in charge of early telecommunications; and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) in charge of nutrition, water/sanitation

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

and also emergency telecommunications. Other agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) consortia acting as standing invitees also form part of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (UNHCR, 2007a)[vi]. Despite all these efforts, UNHCR admits that 'humanitarian responses to IDP crises have overall been characterized by neglect, gaps or failures' (UNHCR 2007a:3).

Definition and Protection of Displaced Persons

Three basic bodies of international law apply to conflict-induced displaced persons apart from a plethora of legal instruments that might provide guidelines in dealing with them. These are International human rights and humanitarian law, as well as international refugee law (Ferris 2008). The latter is traditionally considered separate from the two former ones and is considered to specify protection and assistance based on rights accorded to those recognized as refugees (O'Neil 2009). IDPs on the other hand remain the primary responsibility of their state and are supposed to enjoy the rights that accrue to any other citizen. They are thus entitled to the full protection of national laws as well as those specified under international human rights and humanitarian law which states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfill in respect of the human rights of their citizens and other persons on their territory or under their jurisdiction. The latter is especially applicable in situations of armed conflict (UNHCR 2007a).

16

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

There are different ways of defining IDPs (NRC no date). A generally recognised

definition is that of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Hereafter

GPs). According to the Guiding Principles (1998), IDPs are,

> persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to
>
> leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or
>
> in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized
>
> violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters,
>
> and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

The global crisis of Internal displacement came to the radar of international attention

in the late 1980s (Cohen & Deng 1998b). From a first count of 1.2 million IDPs in eleven

countries in 1982, the number had risen to 20 - 25 million in forty countries by 1997

(Cohen & Kunder 2001). As at December 2009, over 27 million IDPs were reported in

54 countries (IDMC 2010). IDPs are actively governed by the above-mentioned set of

guidelines known as the GPs. As discussed in Tete 2010 [2009], the principles reflect

international human rights, humanitarian and analogous refugee law. They spell out

the rights and guarantees pertaining to IDPs in all phases of displacement and as well,

solutions to their displacement. However, these guidelines do not have the force of

law as does the refugee convention and its protocol.

The convention can not apply to IDPs since it stipulates that a refugee is as such

because of having crossed an internationally recognized border which IDPs have not.

States are however urged to apply the principles in dealing with their displaced

populations who, as a result of being displaced internally, fall under the protection

mandate of their own states. These are states that may be unable and/or unwilling to protect such citizens and might often be the cause of their displacement in the first place.

Though they may be displaced for the same or worse reasons than refugees, their protection continues to remain patchy or at the mercy of their states which can decide to comply or not with the urgings from international community and other International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) to apply these principles in dealing with their IDP populations (Tete 2010 [2009]). A lot of this depends, especially in acute situations of prolonged ongoing conflict - as was the case in Sri Lanka -, on the extent to which such international and even local NGOs are themselves allowed to observe, offer counsel or intervene in sovereign domestic affairs without being seen to interfere. Moreover, not all IDP situations are responded to. For instance though there were an estimated 26 million conflict-induced IDPs around the world, UNHCR reported having helped approximately 15 million people or being active in some 30 IDP operations, 19 of which adopted the cluster approach (UNHCR 2009a).

Refugees

Refugees supposedly enjoy rights linked to their refugee status as specified in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees (applicable to only those persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951) and the 1967 Protocol (without the geographical and time limitations) (hereafter referred to as

the '51 Convention and '67 Protocol respectively). The convention defines a refugee
as:

> a person ....owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,
>
> religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is
>
> outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling
>
> to avail himself of the protection of that country.... (Refugee Convention 1951)

The definition of this convention is widely acknowledged to be more narrow and tends
to be made 'even narrower by states wish[ing] to restrict the recognition of refugees
for a variety of reasons' (O'Neill 1999: 39). Whilst the '67 protocol widened the
temporal and geographical scope of the '51 convention, it did not change its
interpretation (Zetter 2007). In contrast, a broadened definition of the refugee
definition was made by the Organisation of African Unity[vii] (OAU) in the 1969
Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (hereafter
referred to as the OAU convention) to make it more relevant to the political
circumstances of the African continent . The extended definition indicated that in
addition to those specified by the '51 convention, the term 'refugee' shall also apply
to:

> every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or
>
> events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of
>
> origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his habitual place of residence (OAU 1969).

Such a broadened definition takes into account the (post)colonial and proxy war
dynamics of the cold war that have fuelled many wars and attendant displacements on
the African continent, as well as the increasingly civil, inter/intra-state, ethnicised

nature of many conflicts on the continent, usually involving a host of factions fighting for power and resource control in league with some local, regional and international actors (Adepoju 1982; Miller 1982; Crisp 2006; AU 2008). It thus includes persons fleeing from war, generalized violence and natural disasters. Reid asserts that 'the [OAU] Convention does allow scope for prima facie refugee determination in situations of mass influx, particularly relevant in the African context' (2005:37; see also UNHCR 1992; Albert 2010). Thus the OAU Convention ostensibly enlarged on the protection needs of African refugee situations and the group nature of these movements in the search for refuge, though it has been argued that providing for large-scale refugee situations was not its avowed aim (Okkoth-Obbo 2001, 2009). Many of the 53 African states are signatory to it as well as to the '51 refugee Convention and its '67 protocol and are thus bound to apply these provisions in their dealing with refugees (González-Martín 1995). It is widely acknowledged, however, that there is a gap between these provisions and their actual implementation in ensuring the rights and guarantees that should accrue to refugees (O'Neil 1999).

It must also be noted that the '59 Convention and its'69 protocol, having been drafted to respond to post World War II and cold war dynamics in mind, affords protection on an individual basis to persons who are deemed to have fled because of a 'well-founded fear of persecution'. This requires that an individual satisfies both an objective fear (involving conditions in the country of origin) and subjective fear (referring to the frame of mind of the person) (Opoku Awuku 1995). Such persons are then recognized as convention refugees who also enjoy the legal protection from the principle of *non-*

refoulement. This is an important pillar of refugee protection stipulating that recognized refugees cannot or should not be returned to a country where their lives or freedom could be threatened.

Non - Refoulement

'The term *non-refoulement* derives from the French word *refouler*, which means to drive back or to repel' (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007:201). It is thus a negative manifestation of *refoulement*. In the context of continental Europe, Goodwin-Gill & McAdam (2007:201) define *refoulement* as 'a term of art, covering in particular, a summary reconduction to the frontier of those discovered to have entered illegally and summary refusal of admission to those without valid papers'. The authors distinguish it from 'expulsion or deportation which is the more formal process whereby a lawfully resident alien may be required to leave a State, or be forcibly removed' (*ibid*., p. 201). They discuss that the concept can be predated to the early-mid 19th Century as the concept of asylum and the principle of non-extradition of political offenders. However, it was not until after the First World War (WW1) and specifically in 1933 that the principle of refugee non-return or *non-refoulement*, was stipulated in international instruments (*ibid*., p. 202). This principle is stated in Art. 33.1 of the '51 Convention which says:

> no contracting State shall expel or return (*refouler*) a refugee in any manner
>
> whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be

> threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular
>
> social group or political opinion.

Though it was considered so fundamental that no exception was proposed when the above provision was drawn up, States opposed the right to be granted asylum and concerns were expressed about the absoluteness of *non-refoulement* (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam 2007:204). An exemption clause is thus provided in Art. 33.2 against 'a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country in which he is, or who, having been convicted by a final judgment of that particular serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of that country'. In the 1969 OAU Convention, it is given expression in Art. 2.3 which states that:

> no person may be subjected by a member state to measures such as rejection at the
>
> frontier, return or expulsion, which should compel him to return or to remain in a
>
> territory where his life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened for the
>
> reasons set out in Article 1 paragraphs 1 & 2.

In view of its wide acceptance, the principle of *non-refoulement* has also found expression in national legislation. For instance, the Ghana Refugee Law of 1992 in its Part I stipulates the Prohibition of Expulsion of Refugees. Section 1.1 is a positive restatement of the principle of *Non-refoulement* incorporating the '51 provision (1.1a) and the '69 OAU Convention (1.1b); whilst section two restates exceptions as applying to a refugee who is a danger to the security of Ghana (1.2a); has committed a serious non-political crime outside Ghana prior to his entry into Ghana (1.2b) or having been convicted of serious crime in Ghana, constitutes a real danger to the public (1.2c). Section 1.3 on the detention and expulsion of refugees further notes that: 'a refugee

may be detained or expelled for reasons of national security or public order except that no refugee shall be expelled to a country where (s)he has reasons to fear persecution'.

In its Note on *Non-refoulement*, the UNHCR indicated that the legal basis for the principle is premised on its definition in a number of international instruments relating to refugees, both at the universal and regional levels. UNHCR further noted that the provision of Art. 33.1 'constitutes one of the basic articles of the '51 Convention to which no reservations are permitted' (UNHCR 1977:1). Owing to its universal acceptance and general recognition as a principle of international law, UNHCR advocated that the principle be applied irrespective of whether a person has been formally recognized as a refugee (*ibid*., p. 3). As Goodwin-Gill & McAdam (2007:233) discuss, this conclusion supports the fact that those with prima-facie claim to refugee status are also entitled to protection.

However, as Adelman & McGrath argue very few refugees are 'in the *strictest sense* protected by the *legal* strictures against non-refoulement' (2007:378; italicised emphasis in original). This is the case since the majority of refugees in Africa flee situations of generalized violence as stipulated in the OAU convention and are thus regarded as non-convention refugees. Alternatively, these refugees have been termed humanitarian or, category B refugees (ibid. 2007; Zetter 2007); and are to be afforded temporary protection though there is no basis in international law for this (Zetter 2007). That is however the case with the majority of African refugees, who have often

been fleeing en masse from generalized violence due to inter- or intra- state conflict and are thus accepted on a *prima facie* or group basis.

They are thus accorded protection accruing to their generalized displacement situation until such a time when conditions that caused their displacement are resolved or deemed to have returned to normal. If they are to attain to convention status, an individual refugee status determination process would have to be carried out, ascertaining that they have an individual fear of persecution on the grounds provided for in the '51 Convention and its '67 protocol. Even fewer attain this status which then brings them in line for legal protection, assurance against *non-refoulement* and the possibility to enjoy all the solutions stipulated as a means of resolving their displacement. As Goodwin-Gill and McAdam discuss,

> the principle would seem to be predicated upon formal recognition of refugee status.
> That however may be impractical in the absence of effective procedures or in the case
> of a mass influx. Yet it is recognized that the principle should be applicable both to the
> individual refugee with a well-founded fear of persecution, and to the frequently large
> groups of persons who do not in fact enjoy the protection of their countries of origin
> in certain well-defined circumstances (2007:205; author's italicised emphasis).

Recognizing the serious consequences to a refugee of being returned to a country where (s) he is in danger of persecution, UNHCR submitted that the exception provided for in Art. 33 (2) should be applied with greatest caution. Much the same can be said for all the exceptions provided for in other international, regional and national documents stipulating the principle of *Non-refoulement*. In addition, States seem very cognizant of the fundamental importance of the principle. For instance, in several

examples discussed by Goodwin-Gill & McAdam (2007:229-232), various States resorted to 're-characterization' to defend and excuse removals from their territory. Some of these excuses have been used to explain that those expelled were not refugee but illegal aliens or former refugees whose status has ceased; misunderstanding of national policy by local officials; invoking a lack of resources; threats to national security and fears of political destabilization, as was the case with the 2008 removals in Ghana (UNHCR-Ghana 2008; GNA 2008b; Min. of Interior 2008; The Statesman 2008; Cook 2009; Khasalamwa et al 2011). Compared to the large numbers of refugees who have been removed from other countries, the 16 Liberian refugees (13 of whom were registered refugees) *refouled* from Ghana after the post protest period pales in comparison. That is especially so given Ghana's friendly refugee-hosting record. However, such practices, no matter how small-scaled, set a poor precedent in the respect of law and rights. As Goodwin-Gill & McAdam (2007:232) succinctly express it:

> Whilst such concerns [the State excuses above] may be bonafide, the international protection regime provides the basis for a response grounded in responsibility sharing and the rule of law, rather than refoulement.

It is generally noted that there is a rift between State support for the principle in theory and in practice. Hathaway however argues that the principle of *Non-refoulement* cannot be said to have attained the status of customary law, basing his arguments on a negative assessment of State practices. Yet, as several authors (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam 2007; Boed 2000; Rogders 2001) have argued, most States do not claim to have no duty to be bound by the principle: rather, they often have recourse to other excuses to justify their derogation of the principle. Goodwin-Gill,

after an extensive examination, concluded that "there is substantial, if not conclusive authority that the principle is binding on all states, independently of specific assent" (1996:167).

Categorisation of Refugees and IDPs

Debates continue to rage about the viability of the numerous categorizations into which people are placed. Debates about the usefulness or otherwise of categories in the fields of forced migration and refugee studies persist (Zetter 1988, 1991; Malkki 1995b; Scalettaris 2007; Bakewell 2008). It has been argued that categories are not useful for delineating a sociologically relevant group for academic research nor do they necessarily reflect the complex realities that often characterize the field of migration generally (Lubkemann 2008). As Polzer & Hammond (2008) have argued, it is not the categorization in and of itself that matters as it is the invisibilities that such categories and non- categories produce and reproduce.

The argument has been that these categories are important to policy makers and states in ensuring hegemonic state interests; managing human mobility and stemming what is considered to be increasing 'South' to 'North' migration flows; defining agencies' domain of action to justify their own existence; negotiating specific forms of protection rights and entitlements that should accrue to certain categories and not others (Zetter 1991: 207).

As Scalettaris has forcefully argued, 'two powerful assumptions – the state-centred and sedentary bias underpinning the international refugee regime and international

relations as a whole - underlie the assumption that a clear distinction can be drawn between the refugee label and others deriving from it such as IDP' (2007:46). His point is exactly that such labels do not necessarily delineate a particular sociological group with which academics are interested, since it is widely recognized that a broad range of factors affect the choice and degree of agency displayed by people who move in the face of socio-economic, political, environmental pressure (Koser 1997; Turton 2002; Black 2008).

In the case of refugees and IDPs, the only basis of their separate categorizations is premised on their having crossed an internationally-recognised border or not. This is so even though the causes and conditions for movement may be the same or even worse for people who have not had the privilege of a border crossing - which seems to activate international protection – and those who have. Yet these categorisations have important implications for the ways in which different groups are treated or considered to be entitled to one thing or the other. Brun has thus argued that it is not categories per say that matter since they are necessary for understanding the world. Rather, it is how we categorize since this has profound social and political implications for the groups and individuals in question (Brun 2010).

Due to the overlapping causes and consequences of migration, there are difficulties in trying to distinguish between various forms of it. Different typologies have thus been developed and some authors have presented schemas for fitting different types of migration into a single framework in order to help deal with the 'fuzzy boundaries' between various forms of migration (Turton 2003:9) . The latter, according to Black

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

(2008:455), 'range from situations of forced displacement across international borders as a result of essentially political events, to instances where state borders are not crossed, environmental degradation, large scale development schemes or economic crisis which play a significant role in producing migration'. For instance, Richmond (1994:59) distinguishes between proactive (for e.g. tourists, retirees) and reactive (for e.g. African slave trade) migration with political and economic causes as the complex reality occasioning migration. Van Hear (1998:44), drawing on Richmond, also has one axis running from voluntary (meaning more choice, more options) to involuntary (meaning less choice, less options) and along the other axis, five kinds of movement - inward, outward, return, onward and staying put.

Such dichotomies may indeed be useful in helping us order what appears to be a very fussy field, but the causes and consequences of displacement are much more complex and might act in a circular reinforcing way than in a linear progression. As Malkki pithily observed of the causes and consequences of forced movements:

> Involuntary or forced movements of people are always one aspect of much larger constellations of sociopolitical and cultural process and practices. ....Forced population movements have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who, while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments (1995: 496 ff).

Indeed much has been written about the inadequacy of the categories and the discourses building up around the distinction between refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers, and economic migrants (Turton 2003; see also Brun's Lecture notes, 2008). Black (2008:455) for example asserts that, 'even a simple division of migration into 'forced'

(refugees) and 'voluntary' (not refugee) is problematic, as people who are displaced have varying degrees of choice over when, where and how to move, even in extreme crisis (see also Malkki 1995; Turton 2003, for similar arguments). What these arguments make apparent is that, migration has varied causes and consequences, many of which are, usually, mutually reinforcing. In effect, political, economic, social and environmental factors are often interlinked in generating displacements within, across and outside state borders. At the same time, migrants, even forced ones, are endowed with agency and are thus embedded in a particular social, political and historical situation and might make the decision to move or stay within the limited room for manoeuvre they may have (Black 2008; Lubkemann 2008; Turton 2003; Malkki 1995; Zetter 1988).

Studying Displacement and Forced Migration

Forced migration research has proliferated from the dearth observed in researching these issues in the mid-1980's (Harrell-Bond 1986, 1992). In recent times, the debate has been on broadening the scope from refugee research to wider forced migration studies (Van Hear 1998; Betts 2010, Long 2010; *cf.* Hathaway 2007). It has already been acknowledged that complex factors lead to displacement or the movement of people. It is thus argued that a preoccupation with refugees risks neglecting other people who are forced to move due to environmental degradation, development projects and other political, social and economic pressures. It is recognized that displacement has different causes and consequences culminating in refugees, IDPs,

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

development-induced displaced, asylum seekers and other mixed migration flows
(Castles 2003; Lund lecture notes 2008). As Scalleteris (2007) argues, even within the
sub category of refugees, further distinctions exist as to who is a convention one, a
non-convention one or who is simply an asylum seeker whose claim to refuge on
certain bases are yet to be accessed and accepted or denied as deemed necessary.
Similarly among IDPs, the causes and reasons for their displacement differ. Broadly
conceived, these could be due to conflict, environmental or development projects
within their country (Lund lecture Notes 2008; Brun lecture Notes 2008). Generally
however, a complex interplay of economic, social, political and other factors go into
generating and maintaining these situations. Depending on the status one has
however, one is afforded access to certain protections or not. Whilst acknowledging
and not downplaying the importance of the varied causes resulting in forced
displacement, this study focuses on conflict-induced displacements resulting in
refugees or IDP populations.

Usage note on Forced Migrants and Displaced Persons

I recognize the complexity that characterise the movement of people and the decision
to move under restraining conditions so that, movement implies varying degrees of
choice. I also acknowledge that the simple fact of people's movement, within or across
borders does not necessarily dis-place or uproot them from an essential place to which
they are tied, - though those movements might be forced and confound peoples' sense
of belonging. The non-synonymous but interrelated terms displaced persons and

forced migrants thus encompass a broad range of politico-legal categories of persons forced to flee their homes for various reasons.

In view of the foregoing discussion, I find the concepts of 'forced migrants' and 'displaced person' rather inadequate to capture some of the complexities occasioning displacement. With this interrogation in mind, I nonetheless employ these terms in my work. I also use them interchangeably to refer particularly to both refugees and IDPs who have been forced to flee from their country or places of origin and are displaced due to conflict. Refugees in this study thus refer to the broadly defined category of persons who have had to flee their country of origin due to conflict, have crossed an internationally-recognised border, and are considered dis-placed or 'out of place'. Specifically, the study deals with refugees living in a geographically defined camp or settlement setting and on whose behalf various solutions to displacement are being sought. It does not deal with refugees who have independently settled in rural or urban areas and who may not be under the compassionate authoritarian purview of UNHCR, the host government or other humanitarian organizations (*cf.* Crisp 2003; Holzer 2010). IDPs also refer specifically to persons who have fled their places of origin due to conflict, but remain within their country of origin and are the responsibility of their own state.

Even though I may not subscribe to the usefulness of some of these categories in delineating a group or person(s) in question, I have had recourse to their common usage. However, it is long recognized that people often perceive themselves differently from the labels imposed upon them. They might nevertheless draw on various

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

categories discriminately to achieve different ends, as is the case, for instance, in Dick's

(2002) discussion of refugees recasting themselves as exemplary victims in order to

access vital services (see also Malkki 1996). In what follows, I give a brief and general

overview of the various parts and sections of the whole work.

Outline of the Parts and Sections of the Thesis

The thesis consists of two main parts; the overview and compilation of articles.

Including the preceding section, Part one comprises of the introduction; the

background to the study areas; the methodology, methods employed and reflections

on the position of the researcher's in the research process; an eclectic consideration of

theoretical and conceptual perspectives and a final section that synthesizes the three

articles written in relation to the overview, and offers some concluding reflections and

lessons learnt from the research endeavour.

The introduction problematises protracted displacement and the search for solutions

to increasingly intractable displacement and outlines the main objectives and

questions of the study. An appraisal of some previous works done on Tamil IDPs in

North Eastern Sri Lanka, especially Vavuniya, and Liberian refugees in Ghana is also

done. I also discuss the definition and protection of displaced persons, specifically

conflict- induced refugees and IDPs, as well as the principle of *non-refoulement* and the

protections it is supposed to ensure. I then address the usefulness of the

categorizations that serves to differentiate refugees and IDPs as ones distinguished by

crossing (or not) an internationally recognized border even if the causes of their

displacement are the same or much worse. It is argued that categories in themselves

may not be at issue as may be the case with the implications of how such

categorizations are deployed. I then touch on the debates about studying

displacement and forced migration with a shift in focus from refugee studies per se to

a broader remit that takes into account the varying degrees of choice and the complex,

interrelated causes culminating in displacement and forced migration.

In part 1, section two, I respectively present the study areas in context. A background

to Liberian refugees' presence in the Gomoa-Buduburam camp, the cause of their

displacement and the organizations ensuring their care, are considered. The same is

done in the case of Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri Lanka. Unfortunately,

repetitions of some information from the individual articles have been unavoidable

especially since each article was required to be written to stand on its own and be

accessed independently. Also, mainly due to space restrictions, the articles contain

abridged discussions of contextual introductory and background information as well as

methodological, conceptual and theoretical considerations. These have had to be more

thoroughly discussed in the overview sections respectively.

I then consider the methodology or the ways in which I went about knowing about the

subject of interest and the methods through which that was done. Through a series of

long to short-term ethnographic approaches, I sought the views of displaced persons

about their displacement and solutions to these through interviews, observations and

photographs. Reflections on experiences in the field help me to reflect on challenges

and opportunities of working in a dynamic, fast changing context and one under fire;

on my positionality, the emotions and ethics of inter-subjectively co-constituting knowledges with research participants about the issues of interest. In view of the constant movement between objectives, methods, theory and analysis, I then present an eclectic consideration of theoretical perspectives and insights which developed over the course of the work. They served as sensitizing concepts in helping me explore constructions around territory, nation-state and home in the context of displaced persons' rights. They have also helped address the unhelpful dichotomy of fixity of structures and flow of agency that often characterize efforts at resolving displacement. Reflections on certain ways of producing social space to the exclusion of other spaces and an attention to more progressive imaginations of spaceplace and the ontological security of displaced persons have then helped to argue for the need to transcend essentialised ideas about home as roots and routes per se in the reasons informing displaced persons' choice(s) of solution. They have also helped reflect on displaced persons' ambivalences about home and their views as to the solution(s) which may be viable in addressing their displacement.

Actor-oriented perspectives enabled a consideration of displaced persons as heterogeneous and capable social actors whose rights and participation need not merely be theoretically important; but who might and should be afforded the space to participate as right holders in concert with duty-bearers to ensure the respect of their rights which are so elaborately outlined in various instruments purported to be protecting displaced persons' interests. A brief discussion of policy narratives in the implementation of humanitarian policies has helped to make explicit the story-telling

dynamics of policy implementation and the extent of displaced persons' inclusion in practices aimed at addressing their displacement.

I then present a synopsis of the main arguments and conclusions of the articles, and the ways in which they relate to the entire study in addressing the objectives, methods and theories under consideration. A discussion of the linkages between the articles in relation to the overview is done in the synthesis. I also present the main finding, lessons from the two protracted displacement situations and concluding reflections. In part two, I present the articles chronologically as they are published.

An overview of these articles can be found on pages 134 and 135.

[ii] Prolonged displacement situations are not unique to the refugee experience. Though they are commonly called Protracted Refugee Situations, - likely reflecting the legal recognition that the refugee term enjoys - it would be more practical to talk about Protracted Displacement Situations (PDS). This would more accurately capture not only the chronic refugee situations that already exist, but the increasingly alarming rates of IDP situations that are equally intractable, as is the case for instance, in Sri Lanka.

[ii] Pragmatic considerations or rather, funding imperatives/donor requirements dictated my having to research in Sri Lanka. This has created some 'noise' in the work as the focus on Sri Lanka has been limited. However, the process has been fruitful and I have come to grips with the fact that Sri Lanka throws light on the Ghanaian situation and vice versa; at the same time as demonstrating that the research process is not value-free and that change in the research process for various reasons is not only common but also useful (see Spicer 2004; Crang & Cook 2007).

[iii] Very useful situation reports and updates on the north-eastern provinces, and especially on Vavuniya, are also provided by various agencies like the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC); International Crisis Group (ICG), UN Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Amnesty International

(AI), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

(Brookings-Bern), to mention a few; as well as both local and international media agencies. For

instance, see MRGI (2011)'s report on the post war situation for minorities in the north and east (Thanks

to Dr. Brun for pointing me to this informative update).

[iv] According to the UNHCR, their 'population of concern' is composed of various groups of people

including persons recognised as refugees under the '51 Convention and it's '61 Protocol; the OAU

Convention; in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; persons granted a humanitarian status; those

granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection; asylum seekers;

IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR; stateless persons, and returnees (returned refugees and IDPs). It

also includes people in refugee-like situations whose status has not yet been verified. Refugees may be

recognised either on a group basis or *prima facie* basis or following individual determination. These

persons are alternatively referred to as 'refugees and others of concern' to UNHCR (UNHCR 2007b,

2009b, 2010).

[v] For a detailed and critical overview of VR and its application, a well as the concepts of voluntariness;

facilitation versus promotion; the interplay between objective and subjective criteria in determining

conditions for conducive return; as well as 'return in safety and dignity', see, *inter alia*, Warner 1994;

Goodwin-Gill 1989; Whitaker 2002; Chetail 2004; Zieck 2004; Bradley 2007, 2008; Long 2008; Bialczyk

2008.

[vi] This is the primary framework for inter-agency co-ordination of humanitarian assistance which brings

together key United Nations and non-United Nations partners. The IASC was established in 1992 in

response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182, 19 December 1991. Its full members

are the executive heads of UNDP, UNHCR, FAO, WHO, WFP; UNFPA; OCHA; and UNICEF. Standing

invitees (other agencies and NGO consortia) also form part of the IASC. Various agencies coordinate

different areas of need in different displacement situations (UNHCR 2007a).

[vii] Now the African Union (AU).But in this study, and in relation to this regional refugee convention, OAU is maintained.

Background to Study Areas

In this section, I present the background to the camp and the context for Liberian refugees' presence there, briefly touching on the prevailing situation during the periods of the research. I also present a brief background to the conflict and context to Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri Lanka. Sections from the articles have had to be repeated here.

Liberian Refugees in Ghana- Background and Context

The Camp

The research in Ghana was conducted in the Gomoa Buduburam Refugee Camp, which is located in the Gomoa District of the Central Region, and in close proximity to the capital city, Accra (see Fig. 2 in article 2). Liberian refugees have been in protracted displacement in Ghana since the 1990s due to war in Liberia. Although not the immediate neighbouring country, Ghana accepted Liberians who joined Ghanaian evacuees from Liberia, and subsequently established the camp to accommodate them. Over the years and in response to the ebb and flow of various wars in Liberia, many refugees have come to the camp. Some refugees who initially went to Côte D'Ivoire sought refuge later due to the eruption of war there in 2002. Yet other Liberians have come to join family members over the years. The camp hosts the largest concentration of Liberian refugees in Ghana. Other Liberian refugees in Ghana are in the less populated and multi-national Sanzule-Krisan Camp; in various reception centres; or are

urban refugees or self-settled in various areas of Ghana (See Tete 2010 [2005]). Having

fled the social upheavals of civil war in Liberia since May 1990, various waves of

Liberian refugees have been accepted on prima facie basis and have thus had group

status determination under the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees (OAU 1969). Ghana is signatory to this as well as to

the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol. The Refugee Law of 1992 was

passed to give effect to the conventions and protocols so they shall have the force of

law in Ghana. As a legal duty bearer, the Government of Ghana (GoG) through the

Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) fulfils its obligations towards the refugees in concert with

UNHCR-Ghana. The latter operates with its sister agencies, local implementing

partners and others in addressing the needs of refugees of concern[viii] (see Tete 2010

[2005]).

Accurate statistics on refugee numbers, especially those in Africa, are very hard to

come by (Kibreab 1985; Crisp 1999; UNHCR 2007b). These figures are thus only crude

estimates to be read with that caution in mind. Over 40,000 Liberian refugees[ix] were

believed to be in the camp in 2007. From February 2004, and particularly in October

2007, UNHCR started active promotion of VR with a deadline set for 30 June 2007.

UNHCR indicated that approximately 7,013[x] refugees had been repatriated since 2004,

with 2006 and 2007 having the highest numbers of returnees. They indicated that

these return numbers were modest and left much room for improvement given the

cost involved in repatriating within their limited budgetary capacity (UNHCR Interview

2008). For instance, it was reported that as at July 2006, UNHCR had helped 3,500

Liberian refugees in Ghana to return to Liberia since the launch of the VR programme

in October 2004 (Kpatindé 2006). The same author suggests that UNHCR's promotion

of VR was spurred on by high-level Liberian delegation who visited Ghana to encourage

return of more Liberians due to Liberia's steady progression towards stability (*ibid*:

2006; also see UNHCR 2006; Sirleaf 2006).

Due to insignificant strides made in repatriating refugees, however, the GoG

advocated for an extension in the earlier deadline of June 30, 2007 for the assisted VR

programme; and this was granted until March 2009. Refugees staged sit-in protests

from February - March 2008 requesting various provisions and exceptions in the three

solutions implemented. The protests were purported to have become increasingly

disruptive leading to the arrest of some women and children who were subsequently

detained at a youth camp; then later the arrest of some men who were accused of

providing proxy support to the protesting women, as well as the deportation of some

protesters, a number of whom were registered refugees (see article 2; also IRRI 2008).

The extension seems to have been beneficial as it is observed that in the aftermath of

the sit-in protests, over 8000 had repatriated as of the end of 2008 alone, exceeding

returns for the whole of 2004 to 2007 (UNHCR / GRB Interviews 2009).

As signatories to international and regional legal documents, GoG indicated that LI

should and will occur. However, GoG favoured a verification exercise establishing

individual protection concerns of the 'residual caseload' to establish who truly qualifies

for LI. UNHCR was of the view that the exercise would be costly and impractical,

indicating that an invocation of cessation and an end to refugee status for Liberians was actively under discussion (GRB / UNHCR Interviews 2008, 2009).

In July 2009, a verification / profiling exercise was carried out chronicling that 70 of the current 11,108 verified refugees had opted to be repatriated, whilst 2,905 had opted for LI (UNHCR interview 2009). In the period after fieldwork, UNHCR indicated that an invocation of cessation for Liberian refugees was anticipated to occur by the end of 2011 (UNHCR 2010). Consequently, among the proposed solutions, VR is the policy preference for Liberian refugees in Ghana who have been displaced in Ghana for over 18 years (GNA 2008a; MG 2008). More than a decade (c. 1989-2003) of intense and intermittent conflict in Liberia between increasingly divided factions led to massive displacements. These wars peaked in the periods of 1989 to late 1990, 1992 (Operation Octopus), 1996 (3rd World war or 'April 16'), and 2002. These wars, coupled with the 2002 war in Cote d'Ivoire, occasioned further displacements of Liberians to Ghana[xi].

Brief Background of Liberia

Unlike other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Liberia was a not colonized. It was partly founded in 1822 by several US colonization societies following the abolitionist movement in the United States as well as Britain's declaration and enforced ban on slavery as illegal (Nmoma 1997; Sarfo-Mensah 2009). These freed American slaves or settlers known as Americo-Liberians, comprised about three percent of the Liberian population during the early settler days. Together with recaptured Africans who came

to Liberia as a place of refuge, these light-skinned persons mainly professing

Christianity were called 'Congo's by the indigenous populations (Nmoma 1997: 3).

The indigenous populations consist of several ethnic groups the largest of which are

the Kpelle (20.3%), Bassa (13.4 %), Grebo (10%), Gio (8%), Mano (7.9%), Kru (6%).

Other smaller ethnic groups consist of the Loma (5.1%), Kissi (4.8%), Gola (4.4%), Other

(20.1%) (Republic of Liberia 2009; CIA 2011). According to CIA (2011), Americo-

Liberians make up less than 5% of the entire population. Nmoma (1997) indicates that

the Bassa, Kru and Grebo are coastal 'tribes' and were the first to encounter the early

settlers. The Gula, Vai and Mende share borders with Sierra Leone and are split

between the two countries. The Mano and Gio are said to be interior 'tribes' living on

both sides of the border with Cote D'Ivoire. The Krahn are split between Liberia and

Cote D'Ivoire whilst the Mandingo and Kpelle are found both in Guinea and Liberia

(Nmoma 1997). Liberia does not share any border with Ghana and is thus not an

immediate neighbouring country as is the case with Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra

Leone. There are more than 16 indigenous languages and English, which is the official

language (USDA 2011; CIA 2011). In addition to the official language, Nsonwu asserts

that 'many Liberian speak their tribal language and/or Liberian Pidgin English'

(2008:40). Administratively, Liberia is divided into 15 counties which are Bomi, Bong,

Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi,

Maryland, Montserrado; Nimba, River Cess, River Gee and Sinoe (Republic of Liberia

2009; see also appendix V).

The indigenous populations were apparently ruled by kings and village elders prior to the arrival of the settlers (Nmoma 1997). The former ostensibly welcomed the settlers and in 1822, provided agents of the American Colonisation Society (ACS) with access to land in exchange, Bruce (2004:1) asserts, 'for what they assumed would be the benefits of western modernity'. As Bruce (2004) and Nmoma (1997) discuss, their relationship was however fraught with inequalities and soured as the non-ethnic settlers or educated elite virtually colonized the indigenous population and considered them primitives. Americo-Liberian hegemony was thus established primarily on the basis of insidious distinctions between 'civilised' settlers and 'uncivilised' Africans (Bruce 2004). According the Bruce (2004:1), 'this hegemony was secured by superior weaponry and US intervention and was institutionalized when Liberia declared independence in 1847'.

The Americo-Liberian dominance and its one-party state system, the True Whig party (TWP) would dominate for the next 133 years until military toppled it in 1980. President Tubman, the 19th president of Liberia, is indicated to have been the first to reverse some of the discriminatory policies against the indigenous majority through his integration and unification policy in the 1940s. He was however said to have been met with stiff resistance from the urban elite (Nmoma 1997). Though indigenous participation in all aspects of Liberian life is said to have increased in this period, Bruce (2004) indicates that this was not sufficient to break the continued political, economic, social and cultural dominance enjoyed by the ruling Americo-Liberian elite. The latter were said to have controlled the government and economy, owning over 60% of the

country's wealth of timber, diamond, gold, iron ore, rubber and so on. Their families

are also reported to have retained serious legislative, judiciary and executive positions

(Nmoma 1997). Their political dominance and the discriminatory rule of the Americo-

Liberian elite is cited as one of the most important factors leading to the civil war of

Liberia in 1980 (Nmoma 1987; Bruce 2004; PBS 2009).

The immediate precursor to the war is however attributed to Tubman's successor,

President William Tolbert; whose government, in 1979, announced a 50% increase in

the price of rice, a national staple. This led to massive protests, famously known as the

rice riots, against the price increase (Nmoma 1997:4; also Nsonwu 2008; Ellis 1999). In

addition, the oppressive rule of the elite minority, as well as resistance from the

conservative wing of the TWP to opposition to the one-party system, set that stage for

civil crisis in Liberia (Bruce 2004, Nmoma 1997; PBS 2009).

In 1980, Master Sergent Samuel Doe staged a coup against president Tolbert in which

Tolbert was assassinated, bringing an end to over a century of one-party state

domination (Nmoma 1997; USDS 2011). Whilst Doe's coup brought indigenous groups

into power for the first time and was initially welcomed by the local population, his

repressive, corrupt rule and excessive violation of human rights among other vices, is

reported to have turned public opinion against him (Nmoma 1997; Huband 2001;

Nilsson 2003). Doe, of Krahn ethinicity, filled his ranks with people from his own ethnic

group. An attempted but failed coup by Thomas Quiwonkpa against Doe in 1985 led

Doe to unleash his fury against the Gio and Mano people of Nimba County. In this way,

Nilsson (2003) indicates that Doe directly contributed to the ethnic dimension of the conflict that ensued.

In December 1989, Charles Taylor and his armed forces, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched an attack from bases in Cote d'Ivoire. Taylor capitalized on existing animosities by recruiting his rebel support mainly from the Gio and Mano tribes, pitting these against Doe's Krahns and Mandingoes; whilst the Krahn-dominated forces of the Armed forces of Liberia (AFL) did the opposite. When the NPFL reached Monrovia in 1990, with no intervention from the international community and a hands-off policy by the US, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) decided to intervene through the five-member ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Nmoma 1997; Nilsson 2003).

From eight main factions fighting for control over the country's natural resources like timber, gold and iron ore, various groups splintered out leading to intra-factional fighting and splits within several warring factions (Nilsson 2003:7 *ff*). There were also several attempts at resolving the conflict. Nilsson (2003:8) indicates that after 'no fewer than 14 peace agreements between the period of 1990 and onwards'. An interim government under Amos Sawyer was established from 1990-1994 after Peace talks were held by powers in the West African Sub-region. The fourteenth Abuja II peace agreement managed to settle the war enough to give way to elections. Charles Taylor - widely believed to have been voted for due to the fear and war-weariness of Liberians - became President of Liberia after the signing of the 1996 Abuja II Peace Accords and 1997 elections (Kamara 1999; Nilsson 2003). Yet in 1998, 1999, 2000,

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

different Liberian factions made brief incursions into various areas of Liberia (SIDA &

Evensmo *et al* 2000; Nilsson 2003)[xii]. As a result of the peace accord and 1997

elections, however, VR was promoted but was not sustainable due to subsequent

eruptions of war (UNHCR 1999). The second Liberian civil war lasted from 1993 to 2003

leaving over 200, 000 people dead and 1 out of three Liberians displaced internally and

externally (Disney, Reticker et al 2008). In 2005, democratic elections were conducted

and the first elected female African president, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson came to power.

With the elections came the attendant expectation, even if subtle, that return is the

best course of action (see UNHCR 2006; GNA 2006; also article 3). In building on my

previous research done in 2004, the present study focuses, among others, on the

complexities of return and the rhetoric of refugees' inclusion in policy processes.

Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, NE Sri Lanka - Background and Context

Vavuniya

The research in Sri Lanka was carried out in Vavuniya in the north-eastern Province of

Sri Lanka. Like many of the districts in the north and east of Sri Lanka, it has directly

been affected by conflict, and has experienced massive displacements of people to and

from its soil in response to the changing dynamics of the war. Vavuniya has four

District Secretariat (DS) Divisions, one of which is controlled by the LTTE. Vavuniya was

an interesting site for studying IDPs due to its location close to the conflict zone. It is a

border district which, at the time of this study, was a Forward Defence Line (FDL)

between the government forces and the LTTE. This is a position which made it both an IDP generating and receiving district. According to Van Hear & Rajasingham-Senanayake (2006, 47), '[as] in Mannar, Trincomalee and Mullaitivu Districts, IDPs come and go depending on the security situation, military operations and the conditions of shelter'. Field visits were made to Poonthoddam Welfare Centre (WC), one of several transit or temporary centres found throughout the north-east, which are camps where IDPs have been displaced, often for years. Visits were also made to Kalnaddinakulam, Thaddankulam, Kandasamy Nagar, Manik Farm, and Kalmadu Relocation Villages (RVs) as well as Periyarkulam and Kalmadhu, all in various DS Divisions of Vavuniya District (see Fig. 1 in article 1).

The 1983 anti-Tamil riots marked an important point in what has become a protracted conflict in Sri Lanka, that has a long history and has been attributed in part to British colonial policies and practices that created fissures especially between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils (Uyangoda 2007). Sri Lanka, however, is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious state, consisting of 69 percent Buddhists, the majority of whom are Singhalese; 15 percent Hindus, the majority of whom are Tamils; 8 percent Muslims, and 8 percent Christians. The ethnic composition as at 1981[xiii] was 74 percent Singhalese; 12.7 percent Tamils and 5.5 percent Indian Tamils (i.e., 18.2 percent Tamils of Sri Lankan and Indian Origin); 7.0 percent Sri Lankan Moors; 0.3 percent Malays and Burgers respectively ; and 0.2 percent others (including aboriginal Veddas and Europeans) (Silva & Hettige 2010; Kulatunga & Lakshman 2010). In an ongoing conflict which is said to have killed more than 70,000 people (Uyangoda

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

2007), displacements are common - both external and also mainly internal. With regard to the source, nature and intensity of such displacements, Hyndman & de Alwis succinctly note the following:

> [T]he widespread and repeated displacement experienced by hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans, especially Tamils, is a very visceral process of forced migration generated through geopolitical struggles and managed further through technologies of the state … that include identification cards and checkpoints along major roads that connect Sri Lanka's towns and cities. (Hyndman & de Alwis 2004, 536; author's italics)

The tsunami of 26 December 2004, with its resulting devastation, mostly in the north-east of Sri Lanka, compounded the existing inequalities caused by conflict and has led to even further marginalisation of IDPs in these areas. This is the case despite the GPs' stipulation that all IDPs should be treated equally regardless of the cause of displacement and despite competent authorities' claim to honouring their obligations in this respect (see Principles 6.1a, b, and d). What is widely documented, however, are the inequities in treatment occasioned by the international attention and subsequent aid directed to the tsunami-displaced as against the conflict-displaced, especially in the worst-hit area, the north-east (Martin & Charny 2005; Sandlund 2005; Amnesty International 2006).

With respect to the prevailing situation due to renewed war in Sri Lanka in 2006, it was observed that:

> [T]he current government's pro-Sinhalese nationalist policy of massive military retaliation against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, (LTTE) … has

48

contributed to gross human rights abuses and increased misery especially among the Tamil civilian population in the North-Eastern [Northern and Eastern] Provinces of Sri Lanka. (Uyangoda 2007: 68)

Furthermore, the effects were said to be especially pronounced 'in the LTTE-controlled areas mainly in Mullaithivu and Killinochi, and also parts of Jaffna, Mannar, *Vavuniya*, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts' (Uyangoda 2007, 68; author's italicised emphasis). This is the reality for the thousands of IDPs located throughout the north-eastern parts of Sri Lanka and the context in which my fieldwork was undertaken. As noted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC 2008),

[T]he ceasefire agreement of early 2002 officially ended in mid-January 2008, though fighting between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) had resumed in mid-2006 along the east coast and on the edges of the Vanni. The number of casualties among civilians had been sharply increasing. There had been a dramatic increase in the number of alleged International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and human rights violations and of mass population displacements in the North and East.

Pointing to the worsening situation occasioned by the renewed fighting, the UNHCR has indicated that the total number of IDP movements after 7 April 2006 was 187,863, of which 10,657 IDPs that had originated from the districts of Vavuniya, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Mannar were displaced to the Vavuniya District (UNHCR 2008e; see also IDMC 2007; IRIN 2008). This indicates, not the fixity, but what Malkki (1997: 86) describes as 'the transitory, deterritorialised, unfixed and processual nature' of Vavuniya as an IDP generating and receiving transit point, to be studied as such. The figures are as comprehensive as can be expected, yet behind these statistics there are

individuals and families suffering the brunt of the senseless attacks brought to bear not only on combatants but also on civilians who are used as human shields and objects of retaliatory or reprisal attacks by both the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL).

This is in sharp contrast to the relative but fragile calm that existed from the signing of the much-acclaimed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2002 until the escalation of violence in June 2006 (Uyangoda 2007). In fact, this was a period during which many IDPs felt encouraged to explore the possibility of returning to their places of origin, and many did so. According to Newman (2003, 5), 'by the spring of 2002, an estimated 260,000 displaced Sri Lankans had returned to their homes with rates of return continuing at a similar pace as at 2003'. Long-term development and rehabilitation projects for returning IDPs (UNHCR 2003) as the policy direction in terms of finding solutions for the displaced may have been appropriate then, but may not be viable in the current environment of renewed fighting, which is marked by military and counter-military attacks, constant shelling, and prevailing conditions of generalised insecurity as borders of cleared and uncleared areas continue to be redefined through active warfare by the government and LTTE alike[xiv].

Recent developments: In the period following my fieldwork, the situation worsened as the war gathered momentum. This culminated in the stand-off between the Government forces and the LTTE, resulting in GoSL's declaration of victory over the LTTE in May 2009 after about 26 years of conflict (BBC 2009). In the events that followed, many IDPs were reportedly used as a human shield and indiscriminately

killed by both sides as the so-called safe-zone declared by the GoSL in the North progressively diminished. More and more civilians were trapped from mid-January to mid-May when victory was declared. According to the BBC (2009), UN documents indicated that nearly 6,500 civilians died and some 14,000 injured up to mid- April. These are conservative estimates since the actual numbers are probably higher (AI 2009). Al Jazeera (2009) reported that 'the latter stages of the war in Sri Lanka have been carefully choreographed and hidden from the outside world, with the voices of victims silenced through fear and insecurity'.

Vavuniya once again became the hub of IDPs as thousands of civilians fled there or were sent by the Sri Lankan army. According to an Amnesty International report, an estimated 300, 000 IDPs who fled the fighting were detained inside 40 camps spread across four districts. The majority of IDPs were at Manik farm which housed the biggest complex of camps (AI 2009; see also NRC 2011). As earlier mentioned, Pontthodam and Manik farms were some of the so-called welfare or relocation villages visited in the course of field work. Whilst the government continues to refer to these as welfare centres, they have variously been described, especially in the post war period of mass IDP influxes into Vavuniya, as internment camps (BBC Sinhala 2005), detention camps (AI 2009), military-run camps (ICG 2010), prison camps (Al Jazeera 2009) and even concentration camps (Fernandes 2009). These have been in reaction to the common image of IDPs sequestered behind barbed wire fences, with detentions, military surveillance, restricted movement, limited access to humanitarian organisations and independent international monitoring and so on (IRIN 2009, AI 2009;

HRW 2009; ICG 2009). Conditions in the camps were less than ideal due to overcrowding, shortage of food and water, and the anticipated onset of the monsoons which were going to compound problems. The IDP population was described as being confined in 'squalid and dangerously unhealthy conditions' (Lund 2010: vii). Humanitarian access to the IDPs was also limited. IDPs have also been detained in these camps, meant to be temporary, and their freedom of movement restricted or denied despite provisions in Principles 14 and 12 of the GPs against interment and confinement to a camp and the right to freedom of movement (IRIN 2009; HRW 2009). Resettlement, or return to places of origin, though promised, has been slow in being realized. The existence of landmines as well as the lack of adequate infrastructure has been cited among the reasons for not allowing people to return to their places of origin; whilst the GoSL remains intent on identifying and segregating former Tamil Tigers who are alleged to be mixed in with the civilian population (AI 2009, ICG 2010). Though the camps were set up as a temporary measure, the establishment of banks, post office, *etc*. leads some observers to conclude that some camps might become semi-permanent settlements (AI 2009).

Camps

Malkki, discussing the military roots of refugee camps, noted that they easily serve as … 'disciplinary, supervisable spaces … a productive devise of power … [making] people accessible to a whole gamut of interventions, …' (1995:500). As she also observes, 'the refugee camp was a vital device of power: the spatial concentration and ordering of

people that it enabled, as well as the administrative and bureaucratic processes it facilitated within its boundaries, had far-reaching consequences' (*ibid*: 498ff) . Camps[xv] continue to serve as instruments of 'control and care' (*ibid*. 500). To the extent that camps allow easier control and the practice of 'compassionate authoritarianism' (Holzer 2010: abstract), the camp in Ghana might not be an exception. On the other hand though, the camp in Ghana is not like other camps elsewhere. There is relative freedom of movement unlike other camps studied where and through which, as discussed by Lefebvre (1991) and Foucault (1977), the structural and disciplinary aspects of power are brought to bear on displaced populations (see for instance, Hannah 1997; Hanafi 2008).

In contrast to the description of camps in Sri Lanka which have been said to be internment camps, etc., Liberian refugees in Ghana have had relatively free movement, though residence on the camp and/or possession of an ID card has been a necessary condition to access certain advantages peculiar to the camp (Sarfo-Mensah 2009). Also despite provisions enabling refugees' access to education, employment and other such services (OHCHR 1951; OAU 1969; ACHPR 1981; Okoth-Obbo 2009), the refugees have not had easy access to these (Tete 2010 [2005]; Sarfo-Mensah 2009). However, whilst there has been an abysmal description of conditions in camps in other parts of Africa, especially the Eastern African region (Harrell-bond 1996; Hyndman 2000; Hammond 2004), the same cannot be said of the Buduburam camp. For instance, Kpatindé (2006) asserts that the camp is a bustling hub of entrepreneurial activity and that by their proximity to the capital, refugees in Buduburam have an

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

advantage with respect to work opportunities as opposed to refugees in the more remote Krisan camp. The success of the camp is thus attested to and an image of thriving community easily presented; even described elsewhere as 'a lively community … indistinguishable from a typical Ghanaian town of its size' (Owusu 2000:6); 'feel[ing] more like a town than a camp … [with] relative comfort of life' (Kpatindé 2006:1, 2). Thus though it is commonly referred to as the camp, it has been noted that it is viewed more as a settlement due to its long existence and improved infrastructure (Tete 2010 [2005]). Yet, a more nuanced picture of prevailing conditions and refugees' ingeniousness at coping is chronicled by various authors (Dick2002 a, b; Wehjlah & Akotia 2004;Tete 2010 [2005]; Porter et al 2008; Sarfo-Mensah 2009; Omata 2011). In the proceeding section, I present the methodology and methods employed in this study. I also critically reflect on the effects my research experiences and my role as a researcher had on the research process.

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viii In offering assistance, UNHCR-Ghana's focus tends to be on registered refugees; especially, but not exclusively, those on the camp. In the case of Liberian refugees in Ghana, these are mainly, but not solely, registered refugees afforded prima facie or group status recognition. That this is the case is evidenced by the distinction UNHCR and GoG officials make between registered refugees as having a right to assistance programmes and unregistered refugees as falling between the cracks. In the case of the latter needing assistance to, for instance repatriate, UNHCR-Ghana has deemed it necessary to involve the IOM since the latter is an organization focused on broader migration issues (UNHCR Interview 2009; GRB Interview 2009).

ix Admitting that statistics are a challenge due to the fluid nature of the refugee situation, a GRB official indicated that in 2007, there were about 28,000 (UNHCR cited c.26, 000) officially recognised refugees

and in addition, about 10,000 -12,000 unregistered ones totaling c. 40,000 refugees on the camp. In another interview with an official at the camp clinic - whilst making the point that the numbers on the camp and the pressure on the clinic's services had not reduced substantially - it was indicated in passing that in a recent verification exercise, the authorities said there were c. 27,000 registered refugees and about 10,000-12,000 unregistered refugees still on the camp. On the UNHCR statistical database online page, it is indicated that in 2007, there were 26,967 (c.27, 000) Liberian refugees originating from Liberia and residing in Ghana (UNHCR 2011 a, b). This figure collaborates quite closely with the estimate given by the official at the clinic; whilst the GRB and the clinic official's estimate of unregistered ones match. One could thus speak of c. 40,000 of both registered and unregistered refugees being present on the camp as at 2007.

[x] A UNHCR official estimated that the numbers of Liberian refugees repatriated from 2004 to 2007 amounted to c. 7,013; whereas a GRB official placed it at around 6000 persons (UNHCR / GRB Interviews 2008). UNHCR also indicated that in the 2009 verification exercise, there were 11, 108 registered refugees remaining on the camp, 2905 of whom expressed preference for LI, and 70 for VR. It was also indicated that after the 2008 sit-in protests, c. 8000 had been repatriated as at end of 2008 alone. Adding the latter figure to the c.7000 who had been repatriated between 2004 to 2007, amounts to c. 15,000. This figure, when subtracted from the c 26,000 registered refugees, makes legible the c.11, 000 registered refugees who were verified to be on the camp in 2009 (exactly 11, 476, according to UNHCR 2011b).

[xi] Other Liberians joined family members or came for trade and other purposes. For instance, Liberians who came after the 2003 registration exercise or who were present but not captured in this exercise are considered as unregistered ones and, strictly speaking, are not considered as being of concern. However some of such unregistered persons willing to repatriate have been assisted by IOM in conjunction with UNHCR (UNHCR Interview 2009/2010).

[xii] For a more comprehensive treatment of the historical context, background to and causes of the Liberian civil war as well as the Liberian displacement situation, see *inter alia,* Henries 1966; Nelson

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1985; O'Neil 1993; Nmoma 1997; Huband 1998; SIDA, Evensmo et al 2000; Bøås 2001; Nilsson 2003; Kamara 2003; Dick 2003; USDS 2011; CIA 2011.

[xiii] Though a more recent census was done in 2001, some authors chose not to use it as 'it excluded a number of census blocks in the northern and eastern provinces in Sri Lanka with a preponderance of minority ethnic groups' (Silva & Hettige 2010:6; see also DCS-SL 2010: Fig 2.2 note; Kulatunga & Lakshman 2010)

[xiv] For a more exhaustive contextual treatment of the historical and current geopolitical dimensions of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, subsequent civil war, as well as Singhalese/Tamil nation-building dynamics and its impacts on internal displacement, see, among many others, Spencer 1990; Hoole et al 1990; Uyangoda 1999, 2001, 2007, 2010; Brun 2003 [2008]; De Votta 2007; Lund & Blaikie 2010; Herath *et al* 2010; Stokke & Uyangoda 2011; see also Olesen (2009:pp. 71 ff)'s discussion of the discursive dimensions of the Sri Lankan conflict.

[xv] My discussion of camps here is very limited and the evidence especially from Sri Lanka, anecdotal; if only to briefly sketch or compare and contrast the camp situation for Liberian refugees in Buduburam, Ghana and Tamil IDPs in Sri Lanka. This discussion is however inadequate to capture the rich dynamics and the insights such a comparison could make legible. It is a subject worth investigating further. For an overview of critical debates and discussions as to the (de)merits of camps, see, *inter alia*, Harrell-Bond 1986, 1994; Kibreab 1989; Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992; Mallki 1995; Van Damme 1995; Van de Borght & Philips 1995; Dualeh 1995; Black 1998; Crisp& Jacobsen 1998; Hyndman 2000; Schmidt 2003.

Methodology, Research Methods and Reflections on Research Experiences

Methodology

Methodology relates to the 'ways of doing' or the principles and practices by means of which we acquire knowledge of phenomena of interest. This, in turn, is invariably inflenced by ontology and epistemology, that is, our view of the nature of reality or our assumptions about what can be known and how we can know it (Kitchin & Tate 2000). As Aitken & Valentine (2006: 4) discuss, these 'ways of being and knowing' 'helps contextualise and justify the answers to our research questions in ways that communicate what we know' and foreground practice.

In this study concerned with displaced persons' experiences and perceptions as well as constructions about their inclusion in resolving their displacement, the knowledge sought is qualitative, inter-subjectively produced and aims at an in-depth understanding rather than a numerical one. In such a study emphasizing human experience and the meanings they assign to events, its basis for existence is what people perceive to exist and thus, knowledge can be obtained subjectively in a world of meanings created by individuals (Bird 1993; Holt-Jensen 2003). As a result of the 'concern with the complexities of different peoples' experiences of everyday social and cultural processes', geographers drew on ethnographic methods (Crang & Cook 2007:7). I proceed by briefly tracing and in very broad contours, the development and philosophical basis for use of ethnographic approaches in geography; I then focus on narratives or life history, together with other methods, as approaches to ethnographic research and their usefulness in my research on displaced persons.

57

Ethnography in Geography

In geography, ethnography can broadly be located within humanistic geographical approaches which are built upon the foundations of hermeneutics and humanism (Flowerdew & Martin 1997). According to Johnston (1983) and Rodaway (2006), idealism, phenomenology and existentialism provide the main sources of philosophical inspiration for humanistic geography. The concern was 'with the subjective experience, the particular and the unique'; whilst 'the focus was [on] interpretation and reflection on the meaning of what it is to be human and living in a world (Rodaway 2006:263 citing Tuan 1979 and Relph 1985). This people-centred approach with its focus on subjectivity led humanistic geographers to adapt and develop a number of existing methods – notably participant observation, in-depth interviewing, group-based and other approaches (Rodaway 2006: 264, 270). As Flowerdew and Martin indicate, the emphasis has thus been on 'qualitative research methods and in forcing recognition of the role of the researcher and his or her relationship with the researched. Under this influence, ethnography as a method for revealing the layers of meaning in which social actions are embedded has gained a wider acceptance within human geography' (1997:28).

Crang & Cook discuss that humanist geographers, like Ley 1974, 1988; Rowles 1978a, b; Seamon 1979; and Western 1981, began to incorporate ethnographic methods into their research by 'draw[ing] on sociological and anthropological traditions in which different peoples' everyday experiences were … being treated … as localized, holistic 'cultures' which could be made sense of only through in-depth observation, *in situ'*

(2007:7). This reflected a concern for 'the rethinking of people's geographies by using

methods that helped 'to understand parts of the world more or less as they are

experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who "live them out"'

(Crang & Cook 2007:1, 7). These methods, they (ibid: 7) indicate, were philosophically

rooted in phenomenology and social interactionism as well as readings of inter-war

Chicago school ethnographies. This stance sought to examine the subjective

experience of individuals in order to understand and describe their symbolic world

from their point of view; whilst trying to understand a particular phenomenon (Owens

2007:300). These approaches thus refer to an individual's experience as s/he perceives

it as well as looking at the interactions between individuals and their social worlds

(Mischel 1993). It further explores the symbolic system that structures and gives

meaning and significance to social life for individuals. As Mead (1934 cited in Owens

2007:300) purports, 'it is through this symbolic system and social interaction that

meanings are established and learned'. Another central element to these is the idea

that people construct knowledge of their social world through their interpretation of it

and, additionally, through actions based upon those interpretations (Owen 2007:301,

citing Hammersley 1992).

Have (2004:108) indicates that ethnographies enable the use of a variety of

approaches or research techniques always including direct observation in order to

grasp the actually lived reality of a target population. Blomberg adds that they

supplement what people say and afford a firsthand observation of people's behaviour

in the settings in which they naturally occur (1995:176). This of course assumes that

there is a reality out there to be observed and that this may be possible over a long period of observation. Yet as Burr (2003:4) posits, our understanding of the world is both historically and culturally specific so that our understanding is not a product of objective observation but a product of the social processes and interaction in which people are constantly engaged (Owens 2007:301). As Bourdieu (1991, 2003) puts it, social fact or the object of social enquiry is constructed so that 'research on social relations is necessarily made out of social relations' (Crang & Cook 2007; Katz 1992, 1994; Clifford 1997). Nordstrom (2007:251) adds that reality can no longer conveniently be separated from construction.

The literature discusses the pure ethnographic research (Jackson 1985) in which, according to Spradley (1979:3, 4), 'one aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view … where the insider's point of view is a different species of knowledge from one that primarily rests on the outsider's view and one to be discovered'; to the extreme end of 'deep hanging out' (Wogan 2004; also Rodgers 2004) - which I suppose has its merits. However, ethnography in geographic research probably encompasses a range of long-to-short-term engagement(s) in the field where a number of qualitative research methods and techniques are used, whilst most of such research deals with varying degrees of immersion but also uncertainty (Crang & Cook 2007).

For my purposes and as is latter discussed, Liisa Malkki especially offers me useful tools for reflecting on the fluid boundary between Anthropology's long-standing concern for total immersion and ethnography that is increasingly done in transitory

contexts like refugee camps or IDP situations in the face of war. My experience

suggests that fieldwork is often a mix of long- to short- term engagements with

different levels of immersion and hanging out. This is often conditioned by the varying

contexts in which research is conducted as well by the pragmatic opportunities and

constrains presented in the field and the project specifications. Rather than be a

single-minded advocate for this or that method then, I agree with Oakley on the need

for adopting methods appropriate to the research questions and for choosing methods

which are sensitive to power relations, the ethical conduct of research [which also

means a well-designed research able to answer the questions it is set up to answer]

(2005:249, 250). In conducting qualitative ethnographic research, it is possible to

choose from various approaches, methods or techniques with the primary aim of

understanding a situation from the perspective of the participants. Among other

observational and interviewing techniques, narratives are an approach to ethnography

that is concerned with experience and meaning.

Approaches to Ethnography: Narratives and life History

Polkinhorne (1995:6,7) argues that narrative has been used in qualitative research as

prosaic discourse more broadly and more narrowly as the story, that is the form in

which human experience as lived can be expressed. A narrative is a story told by an

individual or group of individuals (Plummer 2001 cited in Owens 2007:309); and takes

many forms (Barthes 1977, 1988; Hatch & Wisniewski 1995; Jovchelovitch & Bauer

2000; Owens 2007).

According to Owen (2007:299,300), 'narrative methods are particularly useful in research concerned, [as this study is], with the relationship between individuals and social worlds of meaning; the ways in which meaning is employed, managed, reproduced and changed through social interaction; and for examining the subjective experience of individuals in order to understand…a particular phenomenon…from their point of view'. He further posits, if ideally, that narrative methods can assist in liberating the voices and stories of people who would ordinarily remain silent. Ayers (quoted in Hatch & Wisniewski 1995:114) also note of both the narrative and life history's 'reliance on story, on subjective accounts, on meaning as constructed by people in situations and [their] focus on life as it is lived'. Riessman (1993:17, 18) indicates that there are a number of narrative types and genres, some of which can be topic-centered or episodic in that they are stitched together by theme rather than by time. Atkinson (1998:8) further notes that there is very little difference between a life story and a life history whilst both are considered, among others, as a form or genre of narrative.

Hay (2000:64) identifies the appropriateness of the use of a life history method for social scientists and particularly human geographers due to their interest in social structures and social change. Hay (*ibid*.) further notes their usefulness in providing information, not only on, 'experiences and events, [but their effectiveness in] 'yield [ing] evidence on how people move through transitional periods and how they interact with institutions'. Reflecting on the importance of narrative research in forced migration studies in particular, Eastmond asserts that:

> it can help us explore the radical discontinuities in the lives of displaced people, as well
> as the struggle to make sense of disruptive changes. However, such experiences and
> the uncertainties they entail also urge displaced persons towards engaging with and
> acting on the predicaments they face (2007:251).

Listening to refugees' concerns about their displacement experience and the ways in which the organisations in charge are addressing these concerns, as this research seeks to do, involves collecting information not only on concrete issues, but also how refugees' move through transitional periods in their interaction with the institutions. I have used the life story to explore refugees' perceptions about their protracted displacement and solutions to their displacement, particularly the policy emphasis on their right to return. So whilst the majority of my enquiry focused on these issues, questions also included pre-, during-, post-displacement experiences and future aspirations. This was to help gain a contextualized understanding of their displacement experience and the ways in which they were assigning meaning to this experience as well as the ways in which this was influencing their choice of one solution or other (see Atkinson 1998:17 par. 1).

More than just a focus on an individual, narrative enquiry can also include a set of case studies or profiles related to the same topic (Polkinhorne 1995). Whilst much storytelling is patterned after a linear progression with an unfolding in time toward a conclusion (Riessman 1993; Good 1994), Eastmond notes an important difference between conventional stories and those of many refugees. As she says,

> refugees are in the midst of the story they are telling, and uncertainty and liminality, rather than progression and conclusion, are the order of the day … [such that] in many refugee situations, the outcome is far from given' (2007.251).

The use of life history in previous research was productive in helping me explore in-depth, some refugees' experiences and ways of coping with their displacement situation. The stories proved insightful in promoting my understanding of their situation and life as lived on the camp (Tete 2010 [2005]). Hay (2008:88, 89) has also observed that life histories offer a means to investigate personal perceptions of people, which may be kept out of the news or deemed of no consequence to the rich and powerful. If the paucity of information in the media relating to refugees' perceptions about the solutions being implemented on their behalf is anything to go by, then the life history offers an important technique for seeking personal accounts and perceptions of such significant events from refugees' point of view.

The use of the life history approach, together with other methods like key informant interviews, observation, photographs, enabled me to elicit information, not only on the perceptions and experiences of the refugees, but also on the social structures like the institutions and the milieus (Hay 2000). These geographies begin with the premise that 'migrants … can be seen as active social agents capable of employing their knowledge of structures to achieve their own goals and, by their collective actions, reproducing and transforming structures' (Findlay & Li, 1997:34). I thus collected ethnographic data through semi-structured and unstructured interview questions which I noted down in a narrative stream (Okely 1994:23; 2008).

Being in the Field

Research Approach and Design

In contribution to the wider project within which my work is situated, I had the opportunity to carry out a preliminary exploratory research in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri-Lanka in October/November 2007. The research here was conducted in a context of a protracted but escalating war situation in the north-east and especially in Vavuniya where a forward defence line between the GoSL armed forces and the LTTE was located. Conducting research under the prevailing circumstances severely restricted and greatly impacted the work that could be done, and necessitated a refocusing of the project. Rather than a longer term ethnographic research as was initially anticipated, my engagement was restricted by the ongoing war and was on a shorter term (see Crang & Cook 2007). The observations and information thus gleaned, though limited, have been useful in reflecting on the concerns of some Tamil IDPs about the solutions they considered viable in addressing their protracted displacement in the face of war. A more detailed account of the design of and approach to this aspect of the work, including a methodological discussion and the challenges of researching under fire, has been elaborated elsewhere (see Tete 2010 [2009]; see also Lund In Press). Fieldwork in Ghana was done in various periods from 2007-2010. It builds on previous research done in 2004 in the camp (Tete 2010 [2005]). For my trajectory into the area of forced displacement research, see (*ibid.*).

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Working on my MPhil thesis convinced me that all stakeholders, including displaced persons, do have something to contribute to the search for solutions; [and] thus views that are worthy of consideration. On return home from my MPhil studies, this provided me added impetuous and helped me focus on securing a job in an institute that dealt with relevant issues of displacement locally, regionally and internationally. Thus my affiliation with the Institute of African Studies which was preparing to set up a Migration Studies Centre at the University of Ghana. Contributing to various research activities in preparation for the establishment of the centre, further enlightened me on broader issues of migration in the sub-region as well as internationally. My assistance in preparing the report on the Ghana Context of Country Perspectives on Women and International Migration, and my subsequent presentation of this report on behalf of Prof. Takyiwaa Manuh at the UNFPA-Ghana Launch of the 2006 State of the World Population Report on Women and International Migration; coupled with other such responsibilities, heightened my sense of the need to explore this field even further. As an option for the further training required to assume the research position at the University, an invitation to apply for and join the research team on "Bridging the Action-Knowledge Gap" project was extended. Having been accepted to the programme and awarded a Norwegian Research Council (NRC) fellowship to enable me pursue this research interest; all I needed was my visa to travel to Norway and get started! But that was to take an unusual six months of waiting. Mid-way through this period and in active contact with my supervisor, we decided that it would be wise to

start some preliminary field work at the Liberian refugee settlement in Ghana. There could not have been a better but more challenging time to do so!

As earlier indicated, at the time of my earlier research there, there were pertinent but unresolved issues around the right of refugees to return with 'dignity and in safety' which required further clarification. For instance, the sharp contrast that emerged with respect to refugees' views and/or preferences of a solution to their situation vis-à-vis the policy stance, was definitely worth investigating further. This was especially the case since an active VR programme being implemented by the authorities in charge. As at 2007, this had moved from the facilitation stage to being actively promoted. June 31st 2007 was set as the date on which registration for facilitated voluntary repatriation for Liberian refugees in Ghana was to end. This was the environment in which my preliminary fieldwork was carried out whilst waiting for my visa as an 'immigrant' to Norway to be issued (a process which went way beyond the expected three months and took almost seven months! But that is another story altogether and not at all the object of interest here). The data shared at this stage was informative and very enlightening. Whilst raising various interesting issues, they were also incomplete since some participants were reluctant to grant long life history accounts at such a difficult and/or critical time of their lives. Some officials were no different in the evasiveness with which they responded to and/or in their avoidance of the researcher. As later discussed, follow up visits were done to fill in the gaps.

Whilst important correspondences but also differences exist between IDPs' and refugees' displacement situation and thus the fieldwork done in the two contexts, this

discussion will mainly focus on the research in Ghana though some examples will be drawn from Sri Lanka as and when appropriate. In the following, I thus present the research context, the methods employed, and the experiences and challenges of researching in Ghana. The latter two are particularly used as a lens through which to reflect on issues of power, positionality, emotions and rigour associated with researching in such a context. A brief background is presented before discussing the research methods.

The research was carried out in a context of protracted displacement; dynamic, ever-changing and in the case of Sri-Lanka, one that was even been under fire. In the case of Ghana, solutions were actively being sought to the displacement situation with a particular focus on the right of refugees to return to Liberia. Thus VR moved from being encouraged to being actively promoted. In 2004, prior to presidential elections in 2005, registration for assisted VR was initiated. June 31st 2007 was set as registration deadline. Following agitations by some refugees in February 2008 and an intervention by the tripartite committee[xvi], however, the deadline was extended to the 31st of March 2009 (See articles 2 & 3).

The periods of 2007-2010 were, in many ways, heavily characterized by this process and its attendant issues reflecting various geopolitical interests. Some significant issues were, from the Liberian Government's perspective, the need for Liberian to return, vote and assist in rebuilding efforts. It was asserted that 'donor states are increasingly re-directing their assistance towards the reconstruction and development of Liberia….and not to refugees remaining in asylum countries' (UNHCR-Ghana 2008:2).

UNHCR reiterated the end of their engagement in group resettlement for Liberian refugees in Ghana or elsewhere in the West-African sub-region. UNHCR also indicated a lack of clarity on continuation of food distribution beyond March 2008 and the ending of all assistance - food distribution and others from WFP in June 2008; and a proposed gradual integration of all assistance activities delivered by UNHCR into national schemes. It was concluded that 'all refugees in Ghana should make decisions about their future accordingly' (*ibid*. 2008:1; *cf*. Swen 2009).

On the part of the Government of Ghana, the former government's active involvement in the Liberian peace process; its inability to support re-integration of large numbers of Liberian refugees without substantial support from the international community; concerns about the presence of undesirable elements on the camp especially in the wake of refugee protests and their perceived risk to public order and national security; and the possibility of an invocation of the cessation clause and an end to refugee status for Liberian refugees; were all seen as compelling reasons to encourage return.

For some refugees, the uncertainties associated with return or worse, the implications of staying put in the face of possible dissolution of the camp and their likely dispersal into other Ghanaian communities; as well as a strong belief in the possibility of resettlement were all very forceful in enforcing a sense of liminality as to the way forward. That was the state a refugee described as their 'being in the valley of decision[xvii]'. This is the context in which field work was carried out. The majority of participants were very gracious, under the prevailing conditions, in granting interviews that could sometimes be long and exacting in what it demanded by way of reflection

on life circumstances and even painful experiences of the past and present (see article 2).

Basically, the research was concerned with highlighting the views/perceptions of displaced persons contending with these issues and how the authorities in charge were addressing or not, refugees' concerns in ways that do not only cater to satisfying policy choices but also, importantly, spoke to the dignity of the refugees. To this end I conducted over 40 semi- and un- structured interviews, about 15 of which were life histories, with some Liberian refugees in the Gomoa-Buduburam camp over the course of 2007-2010. The preliminary data collection was from May to July when I was waiting for my visa to start on the research project. I stayed on the camp for 2 out of the 3 months of fieldwork; other field visits were done in December 2007- January 2008; April/May 2008; and a final validating trip in December 2009 – January 2010, all of which have amounted to about four and half months of fieldwork in total.

Whilst some interviews were one-off sessions, especially those with some officials of the institutions in-charge; some of these were done with different people occupying the same position due to changes in office; whilst other were with the same official at different places and times within the same period of research or during different research visits. Most of the interviews were, however, done in 2 or more sessions of varying duration depending on the participant's circumstances at the time, thus allowing varying degrees of depth in responses. Some were followed up on subsequent visits whilst others were initiated during the 2nd field visit and completed on the 3rd visit. These revisits afforded the opportunity to cross-check earlier information with

participants and feedback into the ongoing analysis. On the final trip, an additional interview was done together with updates from previous participants. Some of the interviews were done at the workplace and followed up at home or *vice versa;* some were solely at the workplace, school or social arena and others solely at home; affording further opportunities for observation and interaction with the research participants in their own milieu.

The participants, representing a range of refugee experiences, were selected through a snowballing method aided by my prior research there; through participants' recommendations, and on one occasion, through a helpful UNHCR official's suggestion. Such a selection could potentially introduce bias and cannot be taken to be representative of the views of entire refugee population or of refugees elsewhere. By triangulating methods and selecting from a range of experiences, solutions and themes, however, I hope that the lessons drawn will have 'exemplary value', specific to that particular refugee context, and hopefully provide useful lessons that can be drawn on to inform other such situations (see Angucia & Zeelen 2008:10).

These were supplemented by observations during my stays in Buduburam and during shorter research visits; focus group discussions with a section of eighth-grade refugee youths (see for instance, appendix VI) and a Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE)[xviii]-supported young mothers' group; photographs, and informal conversations. These were done in addition to key informant and official interviews with GRB, UNHCR, Camp management officials; the Liberian leadership committee; some Community Based Organisations (CBOs); other agencies and stakeholders. There were numerous

other informal conversations as I interacted, observed and engaged in daily activities during my period of stay and subsequent visits to and from the camp. Except in informal visits where conversations with participants were not taped or recorded, - and where interesting points were noted upon leaving the place, - interviews and stories collected were mostly tape-recorded with permission from the participants and salient points written down in varying degrees of detail. Accompanying research assistants also took notes.

I relied on the active contribution of a main research assistant, who had just graduated from the University of Ghana. He was trained and accompanied me on field visits and also did some follow-ups in my absence. He identified a few interviewees and did preliminary interviews with them which I followed up on subsequent visits. Two other male and two female assistants also accompanied me on field visits at different times. The study could certainly have benefitted from the use of refugee research assistants. Though a refugee assistant was employed in the initial stages, his influence in the community, his insistence on speaking to certain participants that he considered well-placed, as well as guiding and even reframing responses, made it necessary to kindly discharge him of his duties. An agreement with another refugee assistant could also not materialize due to the pressure of other commitments on the latter. Unlike in Sri Lanka where unfamiliarity to the field and language necessitated the use of local research assistants, however, training and using Ghanaian assistants was not as problematic. The absence of refugee assistants does represent a weakness as I missed out on the opportunity such collaboration could have offered in terms of the ways in

which it might have enhanced understanding and maybe even served as a bridge during periods of discontent against Ghanaians.

Though the views of Ghanaians were an important counterpoint to that of refugees, I did not systematically research their views through formal interviews. Due to my focus on the perceptions of the refugees' about their displacement situation, other views were important to the extent that they related to the concerns of the refugees (*cf.* Dona 2007). However, I explicitly sought and was sometimes offered unsolicited opinions by fellow Ghanaians, and followed media discussions about the Liberian refugee situation (see articles 2 & 3).

In her observations about writing up life history material, Powles suggests various ways in which this can be done. She points, among options, to organizing the material around salient themes as a complement to research that has been undertaken using different methods (2004:15,16). Having combined different methods and concerned about exploring themes around their displacement experience generally and the right to return in particular, I transcribed and wrote up the material around themes of durable solutions in order to draw out refugees' perception about these issues (see articles 2 & 3). Transcriptions have been long and tedious. Though assistance was sought for transcribing some of the interviews, invariably for familiarizing with the data and coding purposes, I have had to re-listen to tapes that I did not initially transcribe, filling up gaps in these and coding in vivo for relevant and emergent themes in combination with the field notes taken. Some findings centering on excerpts from refugees' views and choice of one solution or other, as well as the disjoint between

policy discourses and practices around the right to return vis-à-vis refugees'

perceptions, are presented in articles 2 and 3.

Gertz (1973) discusses that doing ethnography moves beyond just methods or

techniques and received procedures - and the principles behind how such tools are

deployed - to involve the process of ethnographic research. This is a process which

Cerwonka & Malkki (2007:20) posit, 'entails constantly adjusting one's tactics and

making judgments based on particular contexts that one can never fully anticipate'. In

what follows, I draw on some experiences and challenges in the field to reflect on how

my fieldwork practices and the situated processes of researching on the camp, had

implications for the knowledge co-constructed in that dynamic context.

Reflections on Field Experiences and Challenges: Dealing with a changing and

dynamic context

Much has been written about the fluidity and flexibility of any particular research

process and especially qualitative research (Atkinson 1998; Limb & Dwyer 2001; Hay

2000, 2005; Crang & Cook 2007; Cerwonka & Malkki 2007; among many others).

Having to conduct research in a context, the only constant feature of which is change,

has left me grappling with how to say anything meaningful about the issues under

consideration and do so in a way that speaks to the experiences of the participants but

is also of relevance to a wider public.

Malkki's (1997) discussion of Moore's (1975, 1993) call for a processual anthropology

have been useful here. It is 'an intellectual practice that…foregrounds dimensions of

time and indeterminacy, the co-existence of both…fixity and rupture; and processes and transformations whose outcomes and directions are not as predictable as they sometimes seem to be' (Malkki 1997:87). As she further discusses, the choice to study a refugee camp, which is expected to be temporary (though the reality hardly ever supports this assertion), evokes issues of representativeness and replicability of the data. It has also been my experience that, 'people, their everyday routines, their social relationships, political processes and, indeed the entire social context might well have [has] disappeared or been transformed virtually beyond recognition in a matter of a few months or years' (p.89).

I earlier wrote that the context for my research was at a time when VR was actively implemented for refugees, indicating that the deadline for assisted repatriation was past. I have been to and from the field, read, analysed betwixt, and constantly danced between methods, theory, analysis and write-up. Also, as per funding restrictions; the limited time frame within which to conduct my PhD research; and other such pragmatic considerations, I have finally had to leave the field and come back to base, reading further and trying to make sense of all the information. Both in my presence and particularly in my absence, research participants have 'disappeared' or repatriated. For instance, during my final visit when I tried to contact participants for updates, I observed that a number had left whilst others were no longer at their addresses and/or could not be traced. I knew some of these participants would go, some left in my presence and some who had sworn never to leave had changed their

minds and left; no doubt people continue to weigh their options in the light of prevailing or 'new' emerging information and decide accordingly.

The situation itself has changed and continues to be in flux. From facilitating assisted group return in the earlier stages - which was not always very well patronized as one would have expected or wished - where bulky items could be carried on sea vessels; to assistance being offered on an individual basis with limited luggage allowance by air; to a review of the repatriation programme following protests; *etc.*: the political processes have constantly changed and so have the people and the contexts in which they are.

As England observes about her research, 'only occasionally have my experiences in the field matched up with what I anticipated, hoped and planned for in my office. The field always surprises me and is always changing. As a researcher, I find myself constantly manoeuvring around circumstances' (2002:212).

Indeed the easier aspect is to draw up an elaborate plan of what and how exactly one hopes to go about gathering information in the field; as if there is an objective field out there with equally fixed objects to be studied in their naturally, relatively unchanging and controllable environments. This might be yet another vestige of the bygone era of the objective, fixing, expert, all-knowing and all-seeing eye. Indeed messiness, flux, fluidity and the uncertainties that come with probing into areas of human endeavours, perceptions and experiences are often the rule rather than the exception. As England further proposes, 'shameless eclecticism and a methodologically opportunistic approach to fieldwork' may be necessary. Here 'the practice of fieldwork seems to inevitably become the art of the possible and making the best of what you get, rather

than the ideal hoped for when planning the research' (2002: 212). Valentine (2001:46) suggests that one way of going about this is to employ incidental sampling where researchers can draw on their understanding of issues to decide which angle or perspective they need to explore in the field. Not only does this afford a dialogic relationship between theory, methods and research questions that are intersubjectively produced; but it affords a flexibility that is almost a must in exploring the often-changing perceptions not only of participants, but of the researcher and the issues under study (Tete 2010 [2005]).

In a fast moving field like the one I have to study, I have often found that the possible resides in taking what one might call 'still-life' snapshots, as it were, rather than a movie of ongoing events which might have the advantage of capturing action as it is occurring. Whilst the snapshots might seem to have the disadvantage of fixing events in place, they do provide valuable input into processes which over time; reflecting not static perceptions on the part of refugees and the institutions in charge, but a very dynamic field of interaction (see Brun 2008).

Why and how study voices of displaced persons

In employing all the methods enumerated above, I acted on a firm conviction that the views of displaced persons as capable agents, should matter in the policy practices and interventions on their behalf. This however raises the important issue of whether anyone can speak for others and of whether there is a voice to be represented in researching others.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Any research encounter is acknowledged to be situational, co-produced, and often done on unequal terms (Riessman 1993; Reason 1994). Such an understanding calls for a pause in assuming that the research encounter and interview process is an unmediated way of giving voice to some marginalized research subjects. Butler succinctly notes that:

> The process of research analysis and the dissemination of findings rely on the thought process of a positioned individual, however experienced and academic. It must be acknowledged that there is always a need for interpretation and the expression of personal opinion on any particular data set, so that the researcher is more than simply storytelling. There will always be an element of literature that we must take on trust from the author(s) (Butler 2001:274)

This interpretative, co-constructed nature of the research process reminds that both the researcher and the researched are implicated in numerous ways in the production of the final text which emerge. As Riessman puts it, 'meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively and imperfectly.' (1993:15). Thus the criticism that we cannot speak, finally and with ultimate authority, for others', is well-placed (*ibid*: 15). As discussed in the theory section and in article 3, there is hardly any unitary voice on issues of interests that is to be reported on. Rather, as with all areas of human endeavour, there are divergent, sometimes agreeing, but often contesting views and perceptions on any particular issue. Refugees then like all social actors, are more productively viewed as heterogeneous but capable agents. They thus espouse a multiplicity of views. As Haraway (1988; see also Harding 1992; Cope 2002) and others have so convincingly

argued, we must acknowledge and embrace such diversity, differences and biases in perspectives. For it is exactly that which enriches our research in a world of messy and complicated phenomena where we as researchers as well as the researched necessarily hold only partial and situated views.

Such an acknowledgement, however, does not have to work against the fact that both the researcher and the researched come to research situation with skills, knowledges, tools that are mutually beneficial to both sides. Neither does it work against the fact that they also come to it with their complacencies, ambivalences nor even that research participants are very knowledgeable of the issues under consideration (see Gibson-Graham 1994; Nast 1994; Behar 1996; Rose 1997; Valentine 2002: in Moss 2002:120). But if there is a concern for engaging in research that enables 'the sharing of power and the validating of knowledges of research participants, we must pursue their perceptions and invite their observations, no matter how uncomfortable for us these may be' (Al-Hindi & Kawabata 2002:111). This is not about representing an authentic refugee voice as it is about taking refugees' views seriously and guarding against treating them as 'speechless emissaries' (Malkki 1996:390; Abebe 2008). The same is the case for IDPs who, as is widely recognised, are best placed to evaluate their needs and appropriate responses to those needs (Cohen 2008; Vincent & Sørensen 2001). Indeed, considered within a broad human rights framework on which most of the legal provisions and principles for displaced persons draw, listening to peoples' opinions about various issues is in itself very important.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Consequently, I agree with Robinson's observation on the need to 'speak with our subjects rather than to or for them …in the context of seeking modes of research and representation that disrupt – but do not suspend - the effects of positionality' (Robinson 1994:218). In any research encounter then, not only are our knowledges situated relative to the participants', but we are also complicit in the production of such knowledge and the outcomes. This has otherwise been referred to as positionality, a discussion to which I now turn and by which I simultaneously reflect on some ethical challenges encountered and how they were addressed.

Reflections on Positionality

Prior to and especially since the 1970s, feminist, postmodern and critical geographers have called for a sustained engagement with positionality and critical reflections on the part of the researcher as to the ways in which this affects the research process and outcomes. They also called for an inclusion of the researcher self in research accounts and encounters in the field so as to promote sensitivity to the power relations inherent in the research process (Stacey 1996; Stanley & Wise 1983; Oakley 1981, 2005). Thus reflexivity (reflectivity) or the 'act of reflecting upon oneself and one's experiences' (England 1994:443) has been encouraged. Whilst some feminists insisted on the need for one to be an insider in order to gain a privileged insight into the lives of the researched (Finch 1984 and Devault 1990; quoted in Valentine 2002: 117, 118), others favoured the distancing gaze that afforded a culturally unblinding gaze and thus a more critical stance *vis-à-vis* the researched. Others have, more productively, pointed,

not to the fixity or rigid dichotomy of an insider/outsider position, but a multiplicity of

identities that play out between the researcher and research participants (Mullings

1999; Valentine 2002).

Insider/Outsider?

There has been much debate about the nature of research encounters, the

positionality of the researcher-researched and the insider/outsider dichotomy

(England 1994, Rose 1997, Haraway 1988, 1991, Mullings 1999, Valentine 2002). As

Crang puts it, the researcher inhabits 'multiple positionalities … with multiple elements

of their identities interacting with locals' (2005: 228). In my own experience,

researching as a young African woman has certainly had its merits and demerits. In Sri

Lanka, it was both the source of much encouragement to the younger Tamil ladies who

felt inspired that 'one like themselves' and from so far away, could be talking to them

in that capacity. Even my presentation of an African displacement situation served as

source of prideful hope as to how much better the Sri Lankan situation was (though I

thought otherwise, it was gratifying to allow them this unfounded indulgence!). That

identity however did not always solicit smiles, especially not from the young soldiers

stopping and checking at every possible opportunity!

In Buduburam, there was many a refugee who was very approving/commending. It

could however also be a source of sad reflections as to how their own had not had the

opportunities to be able to realize their potential as they might have. An observation,

which uncomfortable as it is, is unfortunately right not for any real lack of ability on the

part of these young ones, but because of rather limiting circumstances presented by a refugee living (Tete 2010 [2005]). However, the identity as a Ghanaian researcher could open doors as much as it could close them, especially in the difficult times of decision-making for Liberian refugees to return or not to.

Thus, depending on the role (s) I actually did or was perceived to be inhabiting, I experienced not a dichotomy of being an insider/outsider, but a fluidity resulting from varied positions and interactions with the participants. In Sri Lanka, for example, I felt inexperienced and humbled by my newness to the field and the very special circumstances with which the people had to grapple. But, there was also a certain sense of sharing, a *camaraderie*, even, an acceptance that I should be there to experience (on an extremely limited scale, I might add) a bit of what such a life as theirs – living in the teeth of war - could entail. It was what I term the 'glimpse of an outsider turned an empathic gaze with [and of] an insider'.

Whereas by my familiarity with the Liberian refugee situation; a somewhat shared language and thus an easier means of communicating; and a shared sub-regional identity as Anglophone West Africans, one would think we had a lot more in common that would make me more of an insider as compared to Sri Lanka; and in many ways that was the case. Despite this apparent nearness, however, the experience was also fraught with many contradictions! Not least of which was my identity as a Ghanaian which could easily be viewed in oppositional terms. A case in point is a field encounter at an unsettling point in the VR process. This was a period marked by such uncertainty that a refugee earlier described it as their 'being in the valley of decision'. It also came

with a lot of disappointment on the part of the refugees towards Ghanaians for the unfair treatment the latter were perceived to be meting out to them.

On the other hand, some Ghanaians who knew of my research engagement with Liberians questioned my loyalties and berated me for not focusing on more worthwhile pursuits. For instance, Liberian refugees came up during a spirited discussion with a Ghanaian friend. Though it was an interesting discussion about their numerous perceived misdemeanours and the reasonableness in their being asked to return, she suddenly stopped and suggested we change the topic. She explained that she had forgotten we were talking about the people I was working with and thought one needed to be circumspect in what one said. No assurance on my part about the importance of her views for its own sake, would make any difference. My identity was thus both a blessing and a disadvantage. The latter was also the case where some refugees felt that Ghanaians should leave them in peace since they were now asking them to leave their country after having hosted them all these years. The general perception was that the GoG was not standing up for its West African kin as had Nkrumah in the past. As I noted in article 2, 'these were tumultuous times and it took a lot of courteous good will on the part of the research participants to share insights into their lives with a Ghanaian researcher'.

It turned out that a refugee who eagerly offered to participate only needed a sounding board for telling off some Ghanaians who were perceived to have caused a long list of grievances and maltreatment to their Liberian neighbours. The interview, I found out, was certainly not on the agenda of this person, the complaints were!; and I and my

assistant were considered the ideal conduits for expressing those angry accusations. Thus one could easily become an outsider especially as a Ghanaian who could quickly be perceived, (un) justifiably, as the enemy. Apparently and without over-stating it, one could be an outsider in one's own home whilst a shared experience could easily draw one into the warm embrace of 'the pack' thus conferring insiderness, even if but for a moment! Either way, the insights gleaned from both positions are enlightening!

Negotiating Access - Researching the Elite: Much has been written about the 'thinly guarded and well trodden path of [researching] the poor and powerless' (Useem 1995:20; England 2002) as contrasted to researching elites (see Mullings 1999; England 2002). The latter often seems to place the researcher in a relatively powerless position as compared to the former since, as England observes, 'elites …have the power to construct and maintain self-protective and formidable barriers to deter unwanted "outsiders"' (2002:206). I can certainly identify with these observations when I reflect on my work not only with refugees, but also the institutions , often International Organisations and Government Institutions 'in charge' of them. I can candidly recall the sheer intimidation of securing access to some of these organizations with their securitized gateposts and receptionists; the firmly secured gates behind which one can only stand and if offered a seat, sit and observe (or sometimes not), the goings and comings of 'insiders' and the admitted. One can only begin to imagine the unnerving process of having to be checked, quizzed and booked before hopefully, being admitted to the reception post to be further checked for one's fitness to be allowed in to see personnel. Gathering a nonchalant authoritative gait and a forced bravado, often

unmatched by the masked palpitating heartbeats and worried nervousness, is all part

of the game of negotiating access through countless security filters and gatekeepers

guarding the powerful elite. Being armed with a foreign university's letter introducing

one as a PhD fellow to be assisted in every way possible might be useful.

Against my better judgement and in such circumstances, I have also, like England

(2002:208), found shameless opportunism unavoidable. For instance, I have latched on

to a friend's insider status to get a foot in the doorway, so to speak; befriended

security personnel on petty grounds as a shared first name and as one who empathises

with the rigours involved in having to do their job in ensuring security for their

employer; needlessly laughed and struck up conversations in the typical *ahoshisher*[xix]

fashion to smooth the way for the next visit. Navigating through the checks is one

thing but accessing information from the elites is another thing altogether.

In all fairness, some were dignifying and truly generous in their willingness to

cooperate. I cannot neglect to mention an official who not only took time from her

busy schedule to grant me a long and very useful interview during my first visit and

graciously granted situation updates during subsequent field trips. And who though on

a well-deserved leave during my third field trip, went to the trouble of calling from

home to certify my credibility as a researcher who had done previous research with

UNHCR and the refugees. She even went further to kindly request that I am granted

audience with various top-ranking officials despite their busy schedules; a request

which facilitated an otherwise impossible mission of trying to interview UNHCR

immediately after the chaotic post sit-in-protest period when all interview-requesting

persons (effortlessly mistaken for journalists) were pests to be sternly dismissed. As I also wrote in my field notes about renegotiating access to the field in 2007:

> At a prior meeting with the UNHCR protection officer, a potential gatekeeper to the refugee community, I informed of my interest in pursuing further research on the camp and was assured of being given the go-ahead especially since I had 'reported back' my previous research by presenting a copy of my MPhil thesis to UNHCR-Ghana. This set the stage for another meeting with a top-ranking officer to secure permission to access the camp. To jumpstart the process, the officer very helpfully made some calls to the camp manager introducing me and even suggested some refugee contacts who could prove useful in setting the ball rolling. It was also agreed that I go and gather information, identify gaps and then get back towards the end for input and more information from UNHCR (Field Notes, 2007)

Yet a sense of powerlessness when elite muscles are flexed is all too common. This ranges from prior submission of questionnaires for vetting and selective responses; to outright dismissal of issues that are considered too sensitive to be discussed; to refusing to be interviewed but providing videos of organizational activities in country of origin which might or might not provide answers to organizational practices on the camp; to postponement of interview dates until one is on their way out of the field; to rejecting the use of a recorder where it has always been allowed; and to granting an interview with a lost voice where one has to preen to catch drifting pieces of sentences whilst fighting the urge to excuse a tired, overworked officer who has just returned from the camp in the late after-work hours only to be quizzed by a researcher. Interviews with officials of the UNHCR though theoretically possible, could

not always materialise due to various reasons including an officer being terribly busy with 'high-level meetings' at 'such a crucial time in the programme'; subordinates unwilling to talk in the stead of their unavailable bosses; non responses to mail enquiries and so on (Field Notes 2007/ 2008).

For being in the right place at the wrong time, it could be an organization moving offices and thus being told that all equipments and literature are packed and people too busy to talk; or a US refugee resettling agency refusing to grant an interview. After much effort to reach this particular agency; and after a long wait, I was finally assigned an officer to provide answers. My hopes were then raised by being ushered into a conference room where we could have some quiet; only to be 'hit' with the excuse that whatever public information with respect to the Resettlement of Liberian Refugees from Ghana to the US had been made available on the internet and so the researcher would have to consult and make do with that! Under such circumstances, discouragement is not far-fetched but, as I noted to myself following some of these elite-related bottlenecks, giving up was not an option (Field Notes 2008).

Co-Production of knowledge; Research Encounters and Points of Contact

Mutual Learning and Reciprocity: It is noted that 'much research in human geography is done *on* the relatively powerless *for* the relatively powerful' (Bell 1978, quoted in England 2002:210; emphasis in original) and refugees are certainly, if not always, numbered among the marginalized. As England (2002: 209) further observes, the notion of a 'researcher as the omnipotent expert in control of both the passive

87

researched and the research process' is to be rejected. Indeed she joins several people

advocating for a 'supplicant relationship with the researched, seeking reciprocal

relationships based on empathy, mutuality and respect … such that the interview

becomes an evolving co-authored conversation' (2002:209). I see a lot of merit in that,

as in my experience, research participants are often engaged in the situation we seek

to understand and have indeed been coping long before researchers arrive and long

after they have left (see article 1).

As was the case with my research in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka, I was new to the field and the

particular experience of navigating in a conflict setting whereas research participants

not only knew the local context and what it took to survive under such circumstances,

but were indeed the very authors of the issues I wished to study. Whilst I partly

retained some power as a (relatively) young female, African researcher introduced and

accompanied to the field by an organization assisting them; I was also a captive

audience, fascinated by how they managed under the circumstances (an attentiveness

born, not least, out of concern for my own safety as it was out of my admiration for

the graceful calm with which they seemed to be coping). I was thus interested in their

perceptions and attentive to valued insights about how to navigate to reduce risk

which in my case, could mean the difference between life and death! As with research

on the camp, I probably represented a certain position of privilege and went in with

some tools, skills that participants could draw on, but so did they! Thus, I consider it as

a mutual learning experience in which knowledge would ideally be co-produced

though this is not always possible nor is it always done on equal terms. After all, I

return from the field and re-represent information, hopefully in ways that reflect the varied views expressed in the field, but which is likely done unevenly (or has not done justice to all sectors).

Points of Resistance: McKay points to the tendency for feminist researchers to … 'emphasise empathy and alliance with their respondents and neglect to report … resistance to intrusion and exploitation of the research itself' (2002:194). Whist I have certainly experienced many moments of solidarity with participants, there have also been instances where I have actually been powerless and hardly on top of my game. Facing silent refusal to venture any information, to outright refusal on the part of refugees to cooperate any further. This is not always an issue since participants' silences in an interview context, like their stories, can be productive and meaningful (Charmaz 2002). Also, obtaining the informed consent of a participant before interviewing has always been an important part of the process, as has the participant's 'right to withdraw …at any time without any need for justification' (Crang & Cook 2007:74).

A conscious refusal to cooperate after consent has been secured and several successful interviews carried out, can nevertheless be frustrating, leaving one with a feeling of *une mission inaccomplie*. For instance, interviews with some people in the 'Gap[xx]' were particularly engaging but the participants often did not have the wherewithal to stick through to the end. Some thought very much of the immediate benefits and/or just did not have the patience or commitment to see the process through. Yet this is not only to be read as a lack only on the part of the respondents but equally on my part as

the researcher. Indeed contrary to the dismal image painted of people in the gap, the researcher was respectfully received by any from the Gap to whom she was introduced by their kind neighbour. I recognize that it would have been most ideal to interact with them on their turf, in their own environment where they often were and felt at ease. But by virtue of my ability to support almost zero levels of smoking, common in that milieu, due to my pretty bad asthmatic attacks and thus my discomfort there, I was dependent on their willingness to always come to me.

In another instance, after 2 sessions of particularly fruitful interviews with a knowledgeable, refugee woman activist, a third and final interview was schedule to wrap up matters and tie loose ends together. When the research assistant went to confirm the date for the interview, the respondent blatantly refused to converse further. Her reason? She was upset by the way the Ghanaian authorities were dealing with refugees. So as a conscious protest, she was also refusing to speak to 'the Ghanaian researcher' not for any personal reasons but for the symbolic purpose of defiance she believed it would serve.

At least for her, she felt it empowering that she could symbolically refuse to cooperate with a female Ghanaian researcher, no matter the reason why I was there - I had become the pawn in a game of wills! No amount of persuasion would make her change her mind though she was very much aware that I neither represented the government nor even any agency on the camp. Why choose me to make such a point? I was frustrated, bordering on annoyance, for the sudden turn around and the decision to sacrifice our 'fruitful' conversation! But fruitful for whom? Was it not valedictory that

she saw in the process a symbolic opportunity to remonstrate and vent her

frustrations about what she considered the unjust treatment of refugees? Indeed it

was, and shame on me! for I must have been so fixated on the singular, albeit selfish

focus of obtaining what I considered enriching information that I temporarily

abandoned my conviction about the need for the research process to be mutually

rewarding and reciprocal. This is but one of several encounters that evoked a range of

emotions in the course of my research, the issue to which I now turn my attention.

Affect and Emotions in the Field

As Gray (2008) argues, invocations of reflexivity that tends to set the researcher apart,

overlook the extent to which reflexivity is a part of everyday practice in the social

world; practices of which emotions are an important part. From an earlier focus on

empathy or meaning in the study of lived relations in geography in the mid 70's and

early 80's (see Buttimer 1974; Ley 1977; Poccock 1983, 1984), a recent recall has been

for geographers to give room for the expression of emotions and affect in their own

work (see for example, Nash 1998, Widdowfield 2000; Anderson & Smith 2001;

Davidson & Milligan 2004; Davidson et al 2005). This is especially important since

emotions and affect are not only a way of apprehending the world and thus a crucial

aspect of method (Markussen 2006 in Gray 2008: 936); but they are also important as

'ways of being and doing' (Anderson & Smith 2001:8). Yet as McNay (cited in Gray

2008:936) observes, reflexivity 'tends to be represented as disembodied,

disembedded, cognitive, rational and autonomous'. Among other reasons, 'a

gendered bias in the politics of knowledge where emotions are cast as a source of subjectivity…while good scholarship depends on keeping one's own emotions under control and others' under wraps', explains this lack (Anderson & Smith 2001:7). Lund (2011) thus decries the ways in which emotions are de-emphasised in development work though it is an intrinsic part of the knowledge we produce and how we relate to our research participants. She makes a strong case for reflexively engaging our emotions and letting it inform our work theoretically and analytically in order to make the research more intelligible. Indeed, emotions, whether relational, experiential or otherwise, are inseparable from the ways in which researchers and research participants alike, negotiate and make sense of the day to day lives that the former seek to co-produce. The oft-cited disengaged passivity and helplessness of displaced persons; the infantilizing, initiative-suppressing tactics of agencies in charge; the ingenious and sometimes passive but mostly active – if constrained - ways of coping expressed by displaced persons, all provoke a range of emotions and affect in researching such populations.

Expanding the Communication Space: In my own work, I have always grappled with different emotions ranging from a sense of fulfilment to the opposite of extreme helplessness; fear, anger, sy-[e-]mpathy; and disgust at the exploitative 'possibilities' offered to young, virile, edgy [para-] military men *vis-a-vis* their dignified but not always powerful female subjects. Frustrations have also been common and hardly have I left the field entirely satisfied that I had really given anything back for all the extensive information, often touching on the very personal, that I have gathered from

people. These in turn have fed back into the ways in which I have understood and analysed issues. Like Oakley (1981), I have also found it impossible to remain a detached interviewer who is only there to elicit and receive but does not give information back.

So in one instance, among others, I felt it unjustified just answering a participant with the usual 'I've been alright'. This was on a re-visit when she not only repeatedly inquired after my health – because as she said, 'you are looking rather thin'- but shared the issues which had been vexing and disturbing her during my absence: her daughter's deep loss and subsequent depression and her other daughter's 'battles with life' and the resulting difficult reactions and choices these had forced her to make as her mother. Well, despite my own difficulties with discussing that particular experience, the depth of the sharing moved me to go beyond the shallow response to share my own experience of the challenging health situation with pre- and intra-surgical complications that had resulted in my being bedridden; having to undergo a misplaced psychiatric assessment and that had necessitated two surgeries within the space of a month; and one which I had had to undergo in a foreign country on my own with all its associated challenges and stresses. This was a sharing which, rather than close doors, opened up our conversational space. It afforded a more nuanced understanding of, and deeper insights into feelings motivating certain decisions and actions on the part of the participant with respect to the issue under discussion (see also Crang & Cook 2007).

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

I have also been confronted with anger, frustration, confusion, sheer determination, passitivity and a range of other emotions on the part of participants in navigating and engaging with the various policy structures that shape their lives. It is not easy to explicate how one deals with all the painful emotions people express, the discouragement evident in their state of limboness and the fear that I may come back and meet them just as I left them or even worse. In a particular instance, a respondent who had readily agreed to be interviewed broke out in tears whilst recalling displacement experiences and could just not stop. The researcher discretely suggested that the interview be discontinued and resumed at a more appropriate time if (s) he really felt up to it.

Research as Intervention?: As Angucia & Zeleen observe of their action research on the integration of war affected children in Northern Uganda, the interview process became a conduit for expressing grief, pain, frustration and loss, something they characterize as a healing process. They observe about the times in their interview when participants broke down and cried; 'this was most difficult … we had to be patient and empathetic…we were tempted to stop the conversation at these moments but then you always knew it was better to finish the story both for the purpose of the research and for the 'healing process to take place – it was better to speak than bottle up' (2008:13).

It may often be possible to empathise, and indeed it has also been my experience that some participants still agree to go on when, with tears, they have to recount painful memories. Yet it is ever important, in respecting the dignity of such persons, that they

are given the opportunity to discontinue the interview if they so wish rather than just

insist on finishing for the sake of the interview or any other perceived benefits this is

considered to secure for the participants (see Hay 2000). In this particular case,

subsequent conversations indicated that the participant did not have the capacity to

continue and so out of respect for these wishes, the interview was discontinued. This

catharsis on my part might of course have been just what the interviewee wanted, but

I decided that this seemingly interesting story (at least for my purposes), would have

to be forgone in respect of the participant's expressed wish to discontinue the

interview. Where touched, I have cried along, I have listened and respected

participants' means of dealing with epiphanies in their life; offered suggestions where

solicited and possible; and sometimes offered assistance though palliative.

I must however believe that just the act of sharing a human experience with one who

empathises with another's plight, is in itself an intervention, even if its effects are very

modest. For instance, Powles (2004:18) comments on the potentially empowering and

useful nature of life history interviews in helping us 'understand how refugees make

sense of, and respond to, the difficult situations in which they find themselves'. Powles

however also advises caution and the need to conduct it with as much sensitivity as

possible. As she further notes, 'researchers, with a few exceptions, are not therapists

and should not assume that talking about trauma - as many psychologists have

pointed out - necessarily constitutes a cure' (2004:18). This resonates with Butt *et al*'s

(1992:93) caution about 'practicing therapy without a license'. This potential for

invading the privacy of our participants remains an ever present danger in the close

encounter engendered by narrative research between participant and researcher (Butt et al 1992).

However, Wadsworth (1998) indicates that all research by itself is an action on an existing situation, and therefore an intervention, and always has consequences. Aitken (2001) similarly observes that interviewers do not only seek but are purveyors of knowledge such that seemingly innocuous questions can constitute a form of intervention that can be potentially life changing. Admittedly, such effects can at best be partial in addressing the daunting challenges and opportunities that the experience of displacement and life as a displaced person presents. However, it is worth emphasizing that sensitivity in any research encounter is vital as the researcher and research participants engage, albeit unequally, in the act of constructing information that would hopefully speak to the dignity of displaced persons.

Towards a Conclusion

In the preceding sections above, I have discussed the methodology and choice of methods or techniques employed in carrying out research in a dynamic refugee setting in the Gomoa-Buduburam camp in Ghana. These choices, as I explain, were informed by my concern for methods that are sensitive to the perceptions and meanings refugees assign to the phenomenon of their protracted displacement and the solutions implemented as a means of ending this displacement. Ethnographic methods, with their focus on the use of methods and techniques for observation, description and

interpretation concerned with experience and meaning, have been judged appropriate in carrying out this research.

Specifically, the narrative or life history approach, together with other qualitative techniques like observation, focus group discussions, photography as well as informal conversations, have all been useful tools for researching these issues in a transitory context like the camp. The use of all these approaches was guided by a flexibility that informed the selection of participants whilst affording an adaptation of objectives, methods, theories and concepts to arising circumstances in the field. Rather than be an 'anything goes' approach to capturing data, it is meant to speak to the constructedness of the research encounter between my researcher self and the research participants; and the ways in which the information has been co-constituted by our situated knowledge and our complicity in constructing intersubjective understandings of the issues involved (see Crang & Cook 2007; also Bourdieu 2003).

Reflections on experiences and challenges in the field then, have served as a means of making apparent some of these complicities, ambivalences, and situatedness that is brought to bear on any act of discovery; but doing so in ways that are sensitive, not to representativeness, but to quality and depth of the information offered. Rather than generalize then, the discussion has tried to highlight how some insights can be gleaned, not for, but with refugees as they strive to act within the opportunities and constrains of the policies implemented as a solution to their displacement. Hopefully, they help to highlight, not helplessness, but resilience on the part of displaced persons and the need to move beyond a token claim, to an actual inclusion of their varied

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

views with respect to the solutions appropriate in addressing their protracted displacement situation.

This is the discussion to which I turn in the proceeding section as I explore the theoretical perspectives about the dynamics of policy practices in the search for solutions to protracted displacement, especially in the emphasis on return as restoring the links between people and their homes; and the spaces of participation afforded displaced persons in efforts at resolving their protracted displacement.

[xvi]This committee consists of the governments of Ghana, Liberia and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) It is set up to oversee the repatriation of Liberian refugees in Ghana.

[xvii] This is a rephrasing of part of a biblical reference at Psalm XXIII that talks about 'being in the valley of the shadow of death'. It is commonly understood to refer to one being in a situation of extreme difficulty and confusion.

[xviii] WISE is an International NGO in charge of handling and following up women's issues on the camp.

[xix] This is a Ghanaian expression with the negative connotation of conferring unsolicited attention and graces on a person(s) with the aim of currying their favour or approval.

[xx] 'The Gap' refers to areas of the camp mostly occupied by ex-combatants and idle youths and where marijuana smoking is fairly common.

Theoretical Perspectives and Concepts

Introduction

The theoretical considerations underpinning this study are eclectic. In the main, they address constructions around territory, nation-state and home in the context of displaced persons' rights. It is argued that essentialist notions underpin much policy implemented on behalf of displaced persons as reflected in the emphasis on return or voluntary repatriation as the best solution to their 'out of place-ness'. This places territorial nation-state space and sovereignty at the heart of solutions around which is woven the idea of the rights of displaced persons; a right which is all too often subject to the whims and caprices of the state. Important to such policy practices are static ideas of territory, nation-state and homes as roots to which rights and entitlements are attached; and where one must return in order to 'lead a normal life'. A consideration of particular ways of producing socio-spatial spaceplace[xxi] offers tools for thinking about such policy practices; whilst actor oriented perspectives help explore the extent of inclusion of displaced persons in the search for solutions couched in a language of participation and rights.

Discussions over space and place have long been at the heart of geographical debates (Massey 1992:65). The most common formulations about the concepts of geographical space and place associate it with stasis, closure and nostalgia (Massey 1999:167; 2005). Without dragging this important debate, it suffices to note for the purposes of my present discussion that space like place, is not only socially constructed but mutually constituted (Massey 1992:, 2005:184). This is not to say, as Massey further

argues, that 'space is abstract and place real, rather both are concrete, grounded, real, lived' (2005: 185). Thus both space and place are becoming, constitutive of social relations, encountered through a combination of materiality, meaning and practice and socially constructed (Cresswell 2009).

Simonsen further argues for a shift from understanding space merely as a social construct to a 'conceptualiz[ation] of the spatial as a *dimension* of all social life' (1996: 505; italics in original). This makes possible a further appreciation of social life as contextual and as mediating between structures and social practices (*ibid.* 1996). Such conceptions enable an understanding of how space [and place] is produced and managed to create socio-spatial relations (Kitchin 2009).

The latter idea refuses the easy associations of space, place and by extension, home, with stasis. Rather it makes room for human action and does not only theorise about agency, but helps address it in earnest. This facilitates the understanding that 'all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them. They thus engage with structures in order to resist, modify or adapt these in their everyday lives (Giddens 1979). Thus, whilst policy structures may validate, filter down to or, more commonly, ignore less powerful actors, the latter also filter up through various means and strategies to accommodate or resist the (un)palatable even if in imperceptible ways (Kerkvliet 2005). Also, a focus on rights and participation suggests a concern for, or at least recognition of, the importance of inclusion of all actors in displacement policy implementation and practices.

Writings of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, especially his work on "the production of space" (1991 [1974]), offer constructive conceptual tools for thinking about the production of social- spatial space and questions of territory. He argues that "(social)space - [in all its configurations]- is a (social) product…space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action….it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet … it escapes in part from those who would make use of it" (Lefebvre 1991:26 quoted in Delany 2005:59, 60). Lefebvre's distinction between material/ perceived, abstract/ conceived and lived space or *spatial practices, representations of space* and *representational space*, can be particularly helpful in thinking about the ways in which displacement policy remains attached to certain state-centric ways of seeing to the exclusion of other spaces. Delaney (2005) asserts that Lefebvre's *representational spaces* might capture how territory is experienced by refugees and I would add, displaced person in general whose views are of interest in this discussion.

Brenner & Elden (2009), discussing Lefevre's contribution to space, argue that it is the combination of the material, the abstract and the embodied as lived practice that act together to constitute the territorial strategies through which the state strives to control space and the counter-strategies by which 'diverse social forces attempt to create, defend or extend spaces of social reproduction, everyday life and grassroots control' (2009:367). In what follows, I draw on these discussions of space [and place] in relation to territory, nation-state and home, to show the effects of these conceptions

on the way displaced persons are dealt with in the search for solutions to their displacement.

According to Brenner & Elden (2009:364), Lefebvre's concepts of state, space and territory are intertwined in that each term implies the other both analytically and historically. Thus, just as an account of territory must inform any theory of state space, no theory of territory can be complete without an account of both the modern state and its role in the production of space (p. 364). Elden (2009:264, 266), for instance, notes how various 'ways of conceiving, perceiving and living space illustrate the unequal dynamics of human society [such that], space can variously be understood, for example, as a particular political notion of territory, whereby territoriality becomes a strategy of humans to control and dominate space'. It is upon this conception that the nation-state draws its legitimacy of claiming total sovereignty over its territory (Agnew 1999).

It is a well-rehearsed argument that bounded territories are an important defining feature of the nation-state which is the modern mode of political organisation (Agnew, 1994; Turton, 2002; Kuus & Agnew 2008). Agnew (1994:70) has argued that 'actual territorial states, based on circumscribed [or bounded] territory, involve the creation of unified and homogenous spaces in which the various social practices... are rationalised and homogenised'. In what he famously referred to as the 'territorial trap', Agnew (1994) laid bare some enduring geographical assumptions by means of which the territorial boundedness of modern territorial state space has been naturalized. He also decried the seemingly innocent equation of the nation-state with

the territorial state as a result of which the latter has been considered as 'a container

of society', 'expressing and representing the … 'will' of the nation[xxii]' (p.59).

Thus coupled, the modern nation-state, a peculiar modern form of territorialisation

associated with sovereignty, aspires to a linear, totalizing position. This Delaney,

posits, is often deployed as 'a means of controlling "what is inside" by limiting access

or excluding others' (2005:19). Consequently, security becomes an issue of defending

the integrity of the state's territorial space from dangerous outside others (Agnew

1994). By extension, there is a conflation of citizenship with residence within the

boundaries of a particular territorial state so that anyone falling outside constitutes a

threat to the sovereignty of the state (Agnew 1994). Consequently, Kuus & Agnew

argue, 'a societal issue which is framed as a matter of security legitimises urgent state

intervention since such an evocation designates the anarchical 'outside' against which

the state is defined' (2008:99). The exclusionary geographies occasioned by the

territorializing or boundary drawing tendencies of the nation-state an its effects on

displaced persons are well documented (Malkki 1992, 1995b,1996; Keely 1996;

Hyndman 1999; 2000; Turton 2002; Robinson 2002; Appadurai 2003; Loescher et al

2008). As discussed in article 2, the refoulement of refugees under the pretext of their

being 'a threat to national security' makes sense.

Obvious in the term dis-place-ment is 'place' and the idea that people are, as the prefix

suggests, 'not in place' or dangerously outside their territorially bounded homes. Place

and borders are thus relevant in discussions of refugees, for it is its very nature that

confers the label and the practices that govern them as ones who are uprooted, having

crossed international borders and thus in need of international protection. Without these, they become the increasingly alarming numbers of so-called Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are often displaced for the same or worse reasons as refugees, but are trapped within the borders of their own state (see Tete 2010 [2009]). As Hyndman has noted of these and other such borders, 'they are forged through the cartographies of struggle'; aptly observing that 'the assumed primacy accorded the nation-state within humanitarian circles, is problematic' (1999: 104). Thus, even if the source of IDPs' displacement emanates from their own state, they are to remain under its protection with limited intervention from the International Community as a sign of respect to the state's sovereignty.

Our understanding of the complexity involved in the production of space is of course advanced to appreciate territory as just one of numerous expressions of socio-spatial relations (Agnew 1999). As will soon be evident however, the highly sedentary nature of the nation-state, central to which are the ideas of home, land and security, defines and reinforces much of the practices for and against displaced persons. They have a particularly strong purchase in the search for solutions to their protracted displacement and the extent to which displaced persons' views matter in such policy practices.

The Nation-State as Home

Walters (2004) observes that there is an obsession with governing a nation as a home - a place which belongs to 'us' and not 'them'. This, he argues, is what furnishes the

nation-state with its rationale for excluding some whilst including others. This exclusion remains a practice in the inter-national order and is integral to the potent categorisation into which forced migrants are placed.

Walters (2004:241) aptly captures the particular concept of home that legitimises the "protection of the homeland in a world of dangerous mobilities". Home then is 'our' place, where we belong naturally, and every people should (at least) have one. As earlier discussed, it is this very conception of home that confers the label refugee as one who is uprooted from their home, having crossed an international border and thus outside the 'nurturing care of a mother' state. This situation automatically confers upon refugees the status of orphans needing international protection until such a time when they can return to their home for life to be normal. Carried further, it is this same idea which seeks to keep people home as internally displaced persons (IDPs), assisted in their homeland so as not to disturb their place/equilibrium in this natural order of things (Turton 2002; Hyndman 2007). Home then becomes a discursive tool which the powerful use to include or exclude, to secure and to keep off or kick out the unwelcome as they please. An instance, discussed in article 1, is the sequestering of Tamil IDPs in relocation villages or what could be termed 'internment camps', simply because of their membership in an ethnic minority. This is because of their not being considered to belong home; home here being the dominant religio-nationalist group. Similarly, it is the idea of home as 'our place'- 'one we must protect, a place to be secured because its contents (our property) are valuable and envied by others; a place we may invite guests into, but only at our invitation and where they cannot stay

indefinitely' (Walters, 2004:241) - that feeds the whole discourse on the 'right to return' home. By extension, refugees whose countries of origin are perceived to have returned to democratic rule are expected to return and take up the dogged challenge of rebuilding 'their' home and are also to do so as a sign of goodwill towards their host; lest they overstay their welcome. As discussed in article 3, this expectation for Liberian refugees' return is currently true in Ghana.

And who can contest such a view, when we do live "in a world where rights are apportioned on the basis of territorially anchored identities" (Kibreab, 1999:2, 4)? Thus, to the extent that state space continues to be conceived and perceived within policy circles and in practice as *the* home to which displaced persons must be attached, or return to at all cost, other spaces are easily co-opted and rights trumped up. That much is astutely captured by a refugee's observations in article 2 thus: '*We have elaborate rights on paper but when it comes to reality, it's another thing altogether'*.

Home - Roots and/or Routes?

Blunt & Dowling (2006) and Brun & Lund (2008) discuss that both the material and the imaginative constitute home so that home, Brun indicates, "is continually in the making and is not a fixed and static location" (in press : 4). Peil (2009:180) also defines home as 'a material and affective space, real or imagined, that is formative of personal and national identity, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions'. This multi-facetedness of home certainly resonates with displaced persons' expressions about home. As discussed in article 3, the assertion of

youths, who left Liberia at a very young age or have never been there, that home for them is Liberia must draw on an imagined nation-as- home. Their views must be reinforced by their parents' or guardians' memories and emotions of a past material space that also has strong affective connotations and has been formative of their personal identities.

Displaced persons do (non) nostalgically articulate the desire to return home to their places of birth (Zetter 1999). Consequently, they might be said to be complicit in the configurations that threaten to tie them to specific places and homes. Yet, they dare ascribe to other imaginings of 'home in the making' despite the enormous pressure for them to return against all odds. Importantly, they aspire to various other 'homes' and to making home elsewhere (see article 3). For instance, as displaced persons so often remarked about home, their places of origin was home to the extent that their years in exile had taught them the lesson that, even within their own country, any prospect of reclaiming a meaningful life (*cf. 'quality of life'* in Article 1:55) was apparently tied to a pressure for them to return 'home'. This they felt compelled to do if they could hope to benefit from a socially, culturally, politically and economically viable life (see Article 1). More commonly, they considered home to be 'any place where they could be ok, where they could be free' (see article 3). All of these statements point to the need for a more pragmatic view of home as a place where one makes it (Graham & Khosravi 1997; Brun 2008). Home in this context would be a place that fills practical needs rather than a place that confers rights and becomes a nostalgic ideal to be attained through VR or return to one's place of origin. That, in turn, would allow for some

deference to displaced persons in their decision to return or not to their places of origin; an act which might be desired by displaced persons, as a choice or as a last resort (see Tete 2010 [2005]). For instance, as discussed in article 3, a refugee's response to the question: 'where do you consider home?' is illustrative. She said:

> *Home? What can I say? I would have to say Liberia because though I had vowed never to return for all the terrible things I suffered, I have come to know during these hard times here that I am not allowed to call anyplace my home except Liberia. I am forced to. I am not sure how safe and conducive it is now but it seems like no matter where I go in this world; the only place I'm allowed to feel comfortable, respected and secure is where I grew up (LH 3 2009).*

Often, studies about migrant conceptions of home concur to its 'multifaceted dimension', its 'embedded[ness] in socio-spatial experiences', the 'hybrid forms of belonging to more than one place', and the 'contradictory and ambiguous meanings of home as life is negotiated here and there'. Yet, they still maintain a dichotomy between a home 'there' of non-belonging and 'migrants' real home as place of origin to return to' (see for instance Azmi & Lund 2009: 35,37,38,51). And that may well be the case for migrant women for whom 'home here' means visibility and empowerment, whilst 'home there' might mean marginalisation (*ibid*: 46). As discussed in Articles 1 & 3, however, essentialist assumptions about people and rooted homes, as well as powerful geopolitical interests continue to underpin the focus on return/repatriation as the best solution no matter the prevailing conditions in the country or place of origin. In the case of IDPs, these resulted in an emphasis on

relocation policy which compelled landless IDPs to either remain in camps or return to an area against their will during a time of war. Such a focus, it is shown, tends to infringe on the rights and dignity of displaced persons. Though some do articulate the desire to return - and do so in the short or long-term- many favour other alternatives and of making a home elsewhere (see articles 1 & 3).

Here, Massey's discussion about not dismissing people's need to belong to places but at the same time not seeing places as fixed and closed, comes in handy. What it helps us to imagine is space as 'the simultaneous co-existence of social interrelations at all geographical scales; the vast complexity and articulating nets of social relations in and across space'. Places then would be seen as 'being formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location' (Massey 1999:168). This would allow for a conception of spaceplace and a home of 'multiple becomings' (Massey 2005:173), of co-existing heterogeneity and one that is always under construction (Anderson 2008). However, it is noted of this and other such progressive imaginings that: 'it is far more complicated to carry such (an) injunction(s) into practice…than it is to write about it as a general proposition. For instance it is genuinely difficult not to resort to a priori [binaries] of 'settledness and flow' which are actually 'conditions for the existence of each other' (Massey 2005:172, 174). Yet, the caution not to overly subscribe to either closure or a celebration of openness is well placed. As many have argued along with Massey, both can be the outcome of unequal power relations (Castells 1996; Kaplan 1996, Katz 1996; Pratt 1999; Pratt & Hansen 1994; Barnett 1999; all cited in Massey 2005: 173, 174; see also articles 3 & 2).

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Indeed several studies on forced migrant returns have challenged the notion of a fixed geographical home where people dream of returning when obliged to leave (see *inter alia*, Harrell-Bond 1989; Malkki 1992; Stepputat 1994; Allen & Morsink 1994; Turton 1996; Behar 1996; Graham & Khosravi 1997; Zetter 1999; Black & Koser 1999; Bakewell 2002; Black 2002; Hammond 1999, 2004; Eastmond 2002). Rather, home is constructively to be viewed as "a variable term, one that can be transformed, newly invented, and developed in relation to the circumstances in which people find themselves or choose to place themselves" (Hammond 2004: 10). This variability runs counter to ideas of an essentialised rooted place or home of birth naturally apportioned to an individual within bounded territorial entities, and to which one must inextricably be attached to have a normal life.

Of course, displaced persons are not like any other migrants. Their movement is exactly because they have been forced to move, as is often assumed, against their will. Having thus been granted hospitality until such a time that conditions normalise in their mother state or place; they are expected to return without question as a sign of respect or as a matter of courtesy to the host nation and the affable international community of sovereign nation-states who designed the rules that makes such large-heartedness possible (OHCHR 1951, 1967; OAU 1969). This is especially important since states have their sovereign security to protect; because everybody is assumed to belongs to a state where the roots that nurtures and nourishes them are (Malkki 1992); and because scarce resources are best apportioned to deserving citizens of each state who in any case, are not to blame for the greed and irresponsible behaviour that

led to people's displacement in the first place (Betts 2009). The burgeoning literature

on transnationalism (Smith 1994; Basch et al 1994; Hyndman & Walton-Roberts 2002;

Hage 2005; Van Hear 2002, 2006; Silvey et al 2008), among others, has challenged and

added to the mass of knowledge about rooted homes and territories as bounded

spaces.

I am particularly inspired by the anthropologist Hage's (2005)[xxiii] insights which might

help to move the argument beyond a simple dichotomy of roots or routes in displaced

persons' conception of home. Though not speaking specifically of displaced persons

like refugees and IDPs whose movements are markedly different from those of other

migrants, Hage nevertheless points to an important distinction that has to be made

between physical and existential mobility. Noting an inverse relationship between

these two, he argues that people might move physically exactly because their

ontological security is threatened. He argues:

> One migrates because one feels stuck, not in order to feel stuck. …we move physically
>
> so we can feel we are existentially on the move again or at least moving better.
>
> Migratory physical mobility is only contemplated when people experience a crisis in
>
> their sense of existential mobility. Or to put it differently, it is when people feel they
>
> are existentially 'going too slowly' or 'going nowhere', that is, they are somehow
>
> 'stuck' on the 'highway of life',   that they begin contemplating the necessity of
>
> physically 'going somewhere'. The issue [is] … to have or not to have the sense of going
>
> somewhere in life. …Better the uncertainty, which also means the possibility of
>
> mobility, than the perceived certainty of immobility. Often, the trauma of mobility sets

in when one realizes that here too one has ended up being stuck, but in an unfamiliar

rather than a familiar surrounding (Hage 2005: 470,471, 474).

Hage (2005) argues that roots ought not to tie people to specific spaceplaces. He

argues that it is exactly because people are feeling existentially stuck that they initiate

physical movements even if they are not sure what lies in store for them at their

destination. The reflections of a young man, who stayed in Liberia through all the wars

but left when the worst was over, are quite illustrative of this point:

> *When war comes, it leaves so many unpleasant things behind. Emotionally I was*
>
> *distressed. I saw the need to move because I could sense I had to leave. You know …*
>
> *especially when you are overstressed you get paralyzed and these days the young ones*
>
> *get paralyzed very easily (LH 14 2007).*

An important caveat worth repeating here is that, Hage's views do not directly apply to

displaced persons because, he is addressing movement that defines the diasporic

condition, specifically transnational Lebanese migrants who made the choice to move

to geographically dispersed locations. However, Hage's generally applicable insights

move the argument beyond roots or routes per se in refugees' perception about

home. His insights provide a counterpoint to the essentialised emphasis on return

home within the bounded confines of a naturalised territory as the best solution, and

provide a meaningful lens through which to read displaced persons' perceptions about

viable solutions to their protracted displacement. As discussed in article 3, Hage's

arguments make more legible the diversity of refugees' preferences of solution to their

displacement. Though I came to Hage's views much later, they also make legible Tamil

IDPs expressions about the solutions they found viable in the face of war (See Box 1, article 1). What is evident is the way in which these varied decisions seem tied to displaced persons' ontological security (See articles 1 & 3). Massey (1999:171,172; quoting bell hooks 1991:148 and citing le Dœuf 1991) rightly posits that:

> Home is no longer one place…home is a place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One where one confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation…..of course places can be home but they do not have to be thought of in that way, nor do they have to be places of nostalgia. You may indeed have many of them.

What such a progressive imagination of spaceplace and home does then, is to encourage an attention to doing, to the multiple ways in which places and homes become through what we do in, through and with them. The foregoing discussion about the salience of various conceptions of spaceplace, nation-state and home in displacement policy practices makes a few things apparent.

Obviously, structures tend to be romanticised as fixed or bounded, whilst agency tends to be thought of as in flow or unbounded. Actor-Oriented perspectives offer us insight then into useful ways of negotiating, to various degrees, these dichotomous, but not always useful, ways of thinking and doing. Importantly, they help highlight the extent of (non) inclusion of displaced persons in the search for solutions to their displacement and why embedding their views might be expedient. Undoubtedly, the primacy accorded territorial state space, home and attendant policy practices remains relevant in the way displaced persons are dealt with. But so do arguments about not assuming

that displaced persons are uprooted helpless victims in dire need of assistance; but ones capable of displaying agency no matter how much the structures might act to restrain them (Malkki, 1992, 1995; Turton, 1996; Shanmugaratnam et al, 2003).

Actor-Oriented Perspectives

Actor-oriented perspectives, it is argued, 'offer a more dynamic approach …that stresses the interplay and mutual determination of "internal" and "external" factors and relationships, and which recognises the central role played by human action and consciousness' (Long 2001: 13). The sociologist Anthony Giddens, is one who through the theory of structuration, offers ways of closing up the gap between the micro-details of everyday life and the macro strictures of social structures. Giddens offers sensitising concepts in addressing the opportunities and constrains evident in the complex interplay of agency and structure (Dyck & Kearns 2006). Here, structuration is helpful in understanding how spaces of everyday life are both constitutive of and constituted by meanings that are reproduced or reworked in small-scale ways (Dyck & Kearns 2006:95). As Giddens advances, 'dualisms are not so useful in discussing structure and agency since both are mutually dependent and recursively constituted' (1979:5). A central concept of actor-oriented perspectives is agency. This notion attributes to the individual actor, the capacity to actively engage with and reproduce the structures that provide rules and resources for human action (Giddens 1979, 1984). Thus, in what he refers to as the 'duality of structures', Giddens explains that, 'social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are

the very medium of this constitution' (1976:121). Thus social actors have the capacity

to process social experiences and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the

most difficult forms of coercion (Long 2001; Tete 2010 [2005]). Actor-oriented

perspectives aim to offer a dynamic approach which stresses the interplay and mutual

determination of "internal" and "external" factors and relationships; and which

recognizes the central role played by human action and consciousness. According to

these perspectives then, agency and structures are recursively constituted so that they

impinge on each other in enabling and/or constraining ways. This is cognizant of ways

in which social actors are capable of actively engaging with and reproducing the

structures that provide rules and resources for human action (Giddens 1979; Long

2001).

O'Brien (1998:12 citing Giddens 1979) notes that, 'social structures are not simply

"facts" that are external to or constraining upon the use that people make of them.

Rather, they are conditions of social action that are reproduced through social action'.

As Giddens further explicates, 'structure is both enabling and constraining' whereas

'the realm of human agency is bounded. So whilst men produce society, they do so as

historically located actors, and not under their own choosing' (1976:160-1; 1979:69). In

thus arguing, Giddens pays considerable attention to human agency, locating

individuals in the specific life-worlds in which they manage their everyday affairs (Long

2001: 24). As Giddens further points out, 'it is a necessary feature of action that, at any

point in time, the agent 'could have acted otherwise': either positively in terms of

attempted intervention in the process of 'events in the world', or negatively in terms of forbearance' (1979:56).

Long comments that this 'also means recognising that, within the limits of information and resources they have and the uncertainties they face, individuals and social groups are "knowledgeable" and "capable"; that is, they devise ways of solving, or if possible, avoiding "problematic situations" and thus actively engage in constructing their own social worlds, even if this means being "active accomplices" to their own subordination' (2001:24 quoting Burawoy 1985:23). Thus as I concluded in an earlier study (Tete 2010 [2005]), refugees do employ various coping strategies under the most constraining situations and they continued to do so despite intense pressure on them to forgo everything and return (article 2). The same was the case with IDPs who were striving to make the best of an otherwise harsh situation in the teeth of war (article 1).

Agency and Displaced Persons' Engagement with Policy Practices

In dealing with the effects of essentialist notions of territorial state space and an insistence on return of displaced persons to less-than-ideal situations, the point of the discussions above is worth reiterating. It is argued that displaced persons are capable social actors. Like all actors, they do actively deploy various mechanisms to adapt, modify, resist and thus reproduce the structures which act to enable and/or constrain them. Though these tactics may have varying degrees of success or failure, they nonetheless contribute to the reproduction of the rules and norms in intended and unintended ways.

116

Here, a brief consideration of Kerkvliet (2005) and Rigg's (2007:149) discussion of 'everyday forms of resistance[xxiv]' are noteworthy (see also Scott's 1985, 1990 discussion of the 'weapons of the weak' and their 'hidden transcripts', such as foot-dragging, sabotage, even open defiance). Whilst coercion, force, brow-beating and intimidation might have their place under constraining circumstances, the former do remind of the quiet, mundane as well as subtle expressions and acts of 'the not-so-powerful'. These 'acts directly and indirectly serve for the most part to privately endorse, modify or resist prevailing procedures, rules, regulations, or order' (Kerkvliet 2005:22). Rather than celebrate such acts, which might have limited purchase as discussed in article 2, they do give reason to pause. A few of such reasons are the unwieldy and so-called residual caseload of Liberian refugees on the camp; the nominal reduction in the number of refugees on the camp despite projections to the contrary; the unresolved protracted situation; and the simmering unrest or discontent that easily threatens to resurface. Of course, the invocation of the cessation clause and an end to refugee status always remains a distinct possibility (GNA 2008b; MGN 2008; see articles 2 & 3). Yet a sustainable solution, one would aver, is best divested of enforcing impulses.

Even though powerful actors definitely filter down to the local through policies that are implemented and enforced in various ways, so do people also influence such policies, even if subtly (Kerkvliet 2005). This they do through ways, strategies and means at various scales to accommodate or resist the (un)palatable. As discussed in article 2, it is hardly surprising that refugees, after unsuccessful attempts at directing

attention to what they considered their plight, resorted to sit-in protests that became increasingly disruptive in order to get attention focused on their shouting but muted voices. Indeed, these discussions should be particularly salient when considering policies like return that are implemented on behalf of others. Not only do these have far-reaching effects on the lives of displaced persons but they are also rooted in a discourse of rights and participation.

Such policy practices thus posit a concern for the active involvement of displaced persons as much as they envisage successful implementation. Besides, as the discussion about agency and its recursiveness in the reproduction of structure demonstrates, the success or otherwise of any such policies will to a large extent depend on the willingness of the 'beneficiaries' to put them into practice. Our thinking about displaced persons as powerless victims should indeed be advanced enough to recognize their agency. It should take into account the ways in which they do, even if to a limited extent, interpret and re-interpret the structures that act to enable and/or restrain them (Long & Long 1992; Long 2001). At risk of overstretching the point then, the importance of consultations and consensus-building with displaced persons in such decision-making processes can hardly be over-emphasized (see articles 1, 2 & 3). Indeed the question of whose voices should count in displacement / humanitarian policy and practices is definitely not new. This is evidenced by the volume of work done just within the confines of the research group on forced migration at NTNU (*cf*. Lund forthcoming; Khasalamwa et al 2011; Blaikie & Lund 2010; Brun & Lund 2010; Tete 2010 [2005], 2010 [2009]; Brun 2003, 2005, 2008; Shanmugaratnam et al 2003;;

Lund 2000, 2003; among others), not to mention numerous other illuminating works done internationally, a few of which are discussed in article 3. Such a focus in this study then, is to modestly re-emphasise the necessity to transcend the rhetoric of rights and inclusion if efforts at resolving protracted displacement and its attendant problems are to succeed. It would however appear that issues about dignity and autonomy of displaced persons are of tertiary importance to material and political exploitation (*cf*. Scott 1990). What this also makes apparent is the disjoint between a stated interest in the rights and participation of displaced persons on the one hand, and the will to include their views beyond a token acknowledgement of its importance to policy practices and outcomes. It is further argued that mere articulations about the need for participation on the part of displaced persons are not in themselves sufficient, for ensuring their inclusion and rights. This is the discussion to which we now turn.

Rights-Based Approaches and Participation - Whose Rights?

Participation and rights, despite their potential for inclusiveness, are easily co-opted by various actors (Cooke 2004; Cornwall & Brock 2005); and the organisations and instruments dealing with displaced persons are no exception to this trend (Bakewell 2003; Kaiser2004). Thus, as noted in all three articles, there is widespread recognition of the importance of displaced persons' participation in decision-making processes. These are stipulated in various instruments like the Guiding principles in the case of IDPs (see article 1) and an array of international laws providing comprehensive human rights in the case of refugees (see articles 2 and 3). States and international

organisations in charge also pride themselves on affording displaced persons spaces to participate in ways that cater to their dignity and safety (UNHCR 2007a, 2008; Kälin 2000; Guiding Principle 28; to name a few). As the subsequent discussion demonstrates, whilst the emphasis on the rights of displaced and the importance of their participation is widely acknowledged, its practical application remains inherently problematic. A consideration of rights-based approaches and policy narratives is important in a discussion about the search for solutions which are explicitly concerned about rights and voluntariness. They provide a critique of the assumptions underlying discourses on participation and rights and the display of agency. Importantly, they help determine the extent of inclusion of displaced persons in such policy practices; enabling a focus on the need to revalorize the views of the not-so-powerful without whom a talk of rights and participation is made redundant.

The current emphasis on rights-based approaches is increasingly based on recognizing the capacities of people as active claims-making agents; whereby 'participation essentially concerns the exercise of popular agency' (Hickey & Mohan 2004:3). This suggests an unreading of participation as charity to that of participation as a right. As Mohan & Hickey (2004) observe, the focus on participation, not only as imminent but as an immanent process, is thus a focus on tackling inequality structurally. Cleaver (2004:271) adds however, that 'this does not involve abandoning the perceived importance of agency in participatory processes'. He argues that 'the very manifestation of agency, is considered to be, among others, the exercise of voice and the advocacy of rights by individuals, their representatives and collectives' (Cleaver

2004: 271). As Cleaver (2004:275) further claims, 'it is assumed that the practice of participation is unilinear and cumulative; that spaces for participation can be progressively strengthened, that the exercise of agency and voice in one forum has knock-on and cumulative effects in others'. Yet, he rightly notes that 'institutions do not work like that and people's behaviour is not so consistent. So where structural inequalities are great, the exercise of oppositional agency is intermittent and partial.' (pp. 275-276). In considering participation then, we should be concerned, not only with positive transformations, but with the possibility of stoppage and reversals; so should we be with the limitations inherent in ad hoc and infrequent collective action (Cleaver 2004). As discussed in article 2, this is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the case of Liberian refugee protests which occasioned negative transformations at least from the point of view of the refugees. Here, a discussion of spaces of participation which I address below, is relevant.

Spaces of Participation and (Non) Inclusion of Displaced persons

Cornwall (2004:75) asserts that, 'thinking about the concept of space, and of participation, as spatial practice is particularly useful … for illuminating the dynamics of power, voice, agency and difference; whilst it metaphorical qualities allow attention to be paid to issues of discursive closure, to the animation or domestication of sites of engagement, to the absence of opportunity as well as the dynamism of political agency in forging new possibilities for voice'. She discusses three spaces of participation which are closed, invited or claimed.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Any rights-based approaches to participation, Ven Klassen et al note, 'must distinguish between *closed*, *invited*, and *claimed* political spaces, or address the implications these distinctions may have for people's ability to participate effectively'(2004:15). According to Gaventa (2004:35), closed spaces refer to decisions [and policy processes controlled] by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretense of broadening the boundaries for inclusion. Invited spaces are efforts to widen participation by inviting people to participate in public discussions or policy making processes by various kinds of authorities- be they government, supranational agencies or non-governmental organizations - who control the agenda and rules of engagement. Claimed spaces are the spaces which are claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them (See also Brock et al 2001; Cornwall 2002, 2004; VeneKlassen et al 2004).

An example of an invited space could be UNHCR's organization of 'go and see, come and tell' missions where a few selected numbers of refugees are sent to Liberia with the expectation that they will return and report favourably on the situation back 'home', thus encouraging others to seriously consider the option of returning. Another case in point is the invitation of some refugee leaders and older women's representative groups to the Accra International Conference Centre (AICC); after which meeting they reported that they were basically invited not to be heard but to be informed or rather threatened with the invocation of cessation if they did not behave within the confines of the law (Old Refugee Women's Leader, Field Interview May 2008). As discussed in article 2, Liberian refugee protests offer a stark example of a

situation where 'less powerful actors' tried to claim a space in which their concerns

and grievances about the solutions being implemented on their behalf could hopefully

be heard by the 'powers-that-be'. As has already been mentioned, however, this was

less beneficial than anticipated by the refugees. Besides, a closer look at it forecloses

any simplistic ways of addressing the power that was embedded at various levels in

this action.

Gaventa (2004:35) notes that spaces exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and

are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance,

cooptation and transformation'. In order to analyse these more productively, one

needs to move beyond a conception of power that is only understood as oppositional

and in binary terms regarding the powerful and the powerless; to a more nuanced

approach that recognizes that 'the mutual impingement of relations of power and

difference within and across different arenas which conditions possibilities for agency

and voice' (Cornwall 2004:80). Thus, 'those who shape a particular space affect who

has power within it, but those who are powerful in one space may in fact be less

powerful in another' (Gaventa 2004:35; see Scott's (1990:26) idea of 'domination

within domination'). This is clearly demonstrated by the levels of power that were

evident in the Liberian Refugee women's protests which were said to be coercive and

disruptive. That suggests that not all in the refugee population were equally amenable

to the stated objectives of the protestors (UNHCR-Ghana 2008; GNA 2008). For

instance, an illiterate protestor explained in response to her daughter's anger at her

inclusion - in the protests; subsequent detention at the youth camp; and a scorpion

bite to show for it[xxv] - that, her involvement was partly coerced. She claimed that she was led by some 'enlightened' friends of hers into believing that the chances of her far-advanced but stagnated resettlement processing succeeding would be much improved by the benefits that would result from the protests; benefits she would lose out on if she did not join the protests. Also, as other refugees would complain after the largely negative consequences occasioned by the protests: 'a few women have made us foul-smelling to the Ghanaian community when all we wanted was to live quietly and mind our own business' (Field interviews 2008).

Beyond just a concern for the quality of participation then, groups must also be alert to the nature of the spaces in which they are participating, and to what extent these offer real opportunities for influence. As Cornwall and Gaventa (2004:34) discuss, 'spaces of participation are hardly neutral since power relations shape the boundaries of participatory spaces. [These in turn] determine what is possible within them, who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests'. The caution not to conflate participation with transformatory agency is thus well-placed (Cleaver 2004).

Theories of agency tend to emphasise the possibilities of purposive human action, the transformatory and emancipatory potential of agency-as-opposition (Giddens 1984; Long & Long 1992; see also Cleaver's critique, 2004). A common tendency when discussing agency and participation with respect to rights, is to recast the latter in terms of citizenship. Yet, this very formulation or recasting of rights as citizenship poses challenges to the deployment of a rights discourse in the case of displaced persons and their ability to reclaim their rights. For instance, the very idea of

citizenship in relation to refugees is questionable. Even in the case of IDPs who are still citizens, oftentimes their positioning at the margins keeps them excluded. Thus in an essay provocatively entitled 'Who has a Right to Rights: Citizenship's Exclusions …', Maher (2002:19) argues that though human rights are international, they have generally been enacted within the nation-state system and administered as citizens' rights so that non-citizen rights are often compromised. As earlier discussed, this has much to do with a certain production of socio-spatial space as territory and the exclusions such a reading inscribes. It easily constructs a counter position between 'us' and 'them' (Massey 1994), and has important implications for the participatory spaces of those who are considered to belong or not.

Human Rights and 'Citizenship exclusions'?

As Soguk (1999 cited in Ron 2000:139) discusses, 'the term "refugee" makes sense only when it is juxtaposed to its opposite, a "citizen" residing in his or her own "state". Thus by definition, refugees are exactly so because of being outside the protection of their states that accords them citizenship. Until such a time that naturalization or return enables them to 'reassert' their citizenship, their rights are limited to those that are made possible by the international community and the laws that specify these. In any case, the exercise of such rights, if ever it happens, is always subject to the sovereign will of one state or the other. This is evident in the current practice of keeping displaced persons within the confines of their own state who is to protect them, though IDPs' citizenship links might be marginal or considerably strained.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Harvey (2000: 370,371) observes that, 'policy concerning refugees are often concerned with rapid restoration of the citizen-state link broken by forced displacement On this issue, states correctly note that refugee law was only ever intended as a surrogate form of "international" protection until conditions permitted safe return'. As he further notes, 'the constrains of refugee and human rights law do not necessarily make states change their substantive practice' (*ibid*. 2000: 371). As Agamben (1998 in Nikolopoulou 2000:131) has eloquently shown, 'the conflation of man with citizen and of human rights with birthrights has often veiled the exclusion of certain people who fail the definition of a citizenship that is coexistent with nativity, namely with birth and soil'. Indeed, as discussed in articles 1 and 3, neither states' knowledge of and ratification of refugee law, nor their adoption of Guiding Principles, holds them bound to respecting these in their actual treatment of displaced persons.

So whilst human rights can occasion change in the long run, it also provides a discursive device which can be and is easily appropriated by various parties, often to the detriment of displaced persons. By recasting human rights of refugees and their protection as a restoration of their citizen-state links, Harvey asserts that, this 'reveals a commitment to nationality- based understandings of rights protection rather than more idealistic universalist models'; with the former conceptualizing 'human rights primarily as citizen rights' (Harvey 2000: 371). Jackson (2003) asserts then that, the transformatory effects of enacting rights are limited by the social positioning of individual rights claimants and their bounded capacity to make rights real.

Here Mikkelsen's (2005) discussion of human rights as moral and legal entitlements is useful. They have been described as the 'social and political guarantees necessary to protect individuals from the standard threats to human dignity posed by the modern state …' (Donnelly 1989 cited in Mikkelsen 2005: 201). Viewed this way, rights would necessarily transcend the constraints of the nation-state and be considered to be fundamental for peoples' well-being being, dignity and the pursuit of their full potential. This would make legible the UN secretary General Kofi Annan's (1998 quoted in Mikkelsen 2005:200) assertion that: 'a rights-based approach … describe situations not simply in terms of human needs, … but in terms of society's obligations to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals; empowers people to demand justice as a right, not charity; and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed'. Thus by way of their essential humanity, displaced persons would be able to enjoy human rights.

Human Rights and Actors – Right holder and Duty Bearers in the Search for Solutions
Mikkelsen (2005: 202) identifies three groups of agents, rights holders, duty bearers and 'other actors'. All persons, by virtue of being human, are supposed to hold equal and inalienable rights. Of the two latter groups, Mikkelsen further distinguishes between legal and moral duty bearers, the former being the state and the latter, including but not limited to local-level NGOs, aid agencies, regional organizations and United Nations (*ibid*., p. 202). As principal duty bearers, states are obliged by their

signing and ratifying of various human rights instruments, to respect, protect and fulfill all human rights for all citizens.

Apparently, there are various degrees to which states can carry out their responsibilities as duty bearers. Among other things, they are to facilitate, provide and/or promote rights in accordance with international law which allows for a progressive realization of such rights. To do so effectively, 'states can act as a regulator or facilitator of other actors who provide services' (Moser & Norton 2001 in Mikkelsen 2005:202). Many instruments also comprise measures to assist poorer states in realizing human rights by obligating other states to international cooperation. In line with this, 'other actors' like organizations and individuals also have moral obligations to respect and promote human rights. These are moral duty-bearers, existing at all levels, from local to international. These are further sub-divided into primary, secondary, tertiary and external duty bearers, a few of whom are mentioned above (Mikkelsen 2005:202,203).

In human rights parlance then, refugees and IDPs could be said to be right holders and host states, duty bearers. In the case of refugees, a medley of organizations would then be moral duty bearers, foremost of which is the UNHCR. According to its mandate, UNHCR's primary purpose is 'to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees' in concert with host states. To this end, 'it strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country' (UNHCR 2010). To achieve this, it works in partnership with governments, regional,

international and non-governmental organizations. On this point, Loescher et al

extendedly note:

> UNHCR is the only global organization with a specific mandate to ensure the protection
> of refugees and to find solutions to their plight. It is structurally and operationally
> linked to a wide range of actors in the international system, including donor and
> refugee-hosting states, other UN agencies, international, national and local NGOs, and
> a number of other actors. UNHCR is also dependent on voluntary contributions from
> donors to carry out its work. While each of these actors have their own interests and
> priorities, UNHCR is increasingly reliant upon them for en exercise of its core mandate
> responsibilities (2008:73).

As mentioned above, UNHCR as a tertiary moral duty bearer works in concert with all

levels of moral duty bearers as well as the legal duty bearer, the state, in ensuring the

protection of refugees and increasingly other displaced persons like IDPs. To do this,

they are greatly reliant on the support of donors whose voluntary contributions enable

them to carry out their mandates.

In the case of Liberian refugees in Ghana, UNHCR works in concert with the

Government of Ghana and is assisted by a range of sister organizations like the FAO,

UNICEF and local implementing partners such as the National Catholic Secretariat

(NCS), the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), the Assemblies of God Relief and

Development Services (AGREDS) and the Ghana Red Cross (GRC), among others (see

Tete 2010 [2005]). With respect to IDPs, various functionaries of the host state, that is

GoSL, is assisted by a plethora of international and local Non-Governmental

Organisations (l-NGOs) though the IDPs remain the main responsibility of their own

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

State since they remain within its borders (see, for instance, UNOCHA (2009)'s contact list of organizations assisting in the Vavuniya District) .

International law – like the refuge convention and its (regional) protocols and guidelines like the Guiding Principles - specifies legally binding obligations that claim that others have the duties to facilitate the fulfilment of people's rights and fundamental freedoms. By ratifying or acceding to these international human rights treaties, states agree to be bound by these legal obligations that require them to take necessary legislative, administrative or policy measures, and to provide appropriate remedies in cases of violations (*ibid*., p. 203). Right-holder are then expected to be active subjects who through their actions, whenever possible, ensure the satisfaction of their needs, individually or in association with others (*ibid*., p. 202). Such rights-based approaches, Michelson argues, aim to realize human rights by encouraging duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations and empowering right-holders to claim their rights (*ibid*., p. 205).

Though human rights are supposed to be universal and inalienable, thus applicable to all, they are often recast as States' obligations towards their citizens (see Mikkelsen 2005). It would be most ideal if Donnelly's assertion that 'human rights are not granted by the state' were right. However as he further admits, 'states are viewed as major contributors to the realization of rights' (1992:305,306).

As earlier argued, refugees can hardly be designated citizens in their country of asylum except when granted naturalization possibilities. IDPs are also often on the fringes of the states' interests, since their displacement is often caused by the same state whose

protection they are supposed to be enjoying and which is supposed to accord them rights. By conflating what are supposed to be inalienable, universal rights with citizenship and thus with nativity, the implicit suggestion is that meaningful participation only becomes possible upon return to one's soil. This also explains the emphasis on repatriation as the best solution and return as the only right to which displaced persons are entitled; whereas the other two solutions are actually a privilege to be accorded as a charity by benevolent host states or the international community. Coupled with the powerful interests that are shown to underpin the policy implementation of solutions, how and on what basis can a discourse on the rights and participation of displaced persons ever be enforced?

This discussion is particularly salient when considered in the light of the logic behind policy processes as the subsequent discussion of policy narratives makes apparent. As discussed in article 2, a consideration of policy narratives and the dynamics of humanitarian policy intervention are necessary for appreciating the (de) linkages between policy articulations about participation and actual practices. This will help clarify the dynamics and interests behind such policy practices and the extent to which the concerns of displaced persons are addressed in the search for solutions to their displacement.

Policy Narratives and the Dynamics of Humanitarian Policy Processes

Policy, according to Blaikie (2010: 2; see also Roe 1994; Sutton 1999; Keeley & Scoones 2003, Colebatch, 2006), may be defined as a set of stated intentions and resultant

practices in the name of the public good. The policy process is the means by which policy is conceived, negotiated, expressed, and possibly brought into law, and the procedures of implementation and practice. Understanding the policy processes is essential for appreciating how they actually (and often informally) take place and for explaining outcomes. Policy debates and analysis are an interplay between facts, norms and desired actions in which evidence is diverse and contestable (Head 2008). Different stakeholders often have conflicting interests and divergent views on framing problems and finding solutions; something which influences policy development and implementation. Blaikie argues that:

> Policy … does not emerge as a linear response to "truth talking to power" – as a result of facts from whatever source, including research, which reveal new truths and support alternative rational arguments for change'. [Rather], they are negotiated among a range of actors [earlier identified in this study as legal and moral duty bearers as well as right holders]. In most cases, it is not the policy itself which is the focus of negotiation but the broader [geo] political issues which a particular policy framework implicates' (Blaikie 2010:2).

In this work, policy practices like return or voluntary repatriation, as well as local integration and resettlement have all been shown to be underpinned by various such issues. Among others, essentialist conceptions of space and place combined with overriding states' interests in the search for solutions; real or perceived security threats as well as host population animosities occasioned by protracted displacement and the prolonged presence of displaced persons in a host state; politico-ethnic considerations in favour of not upsetting the ethnic status quo and thus the make-up

of the electorate; concerns about the over-flooding of Western borders by third world migrants and the need to tighten controls; donor exigencies and disinterest; expanded humanitarian agendas and overstretched resources; responding to regional humanitarian imperatives at the expense of local needs; States' acquiescence to dominant policy discourses and displaced persons' own ambivalences; ignorance of, rather than engagement with, divergent voices; are but a few of such broader geopolitical issues that such policies implicates (see articles 1, 2 & 3).

Dynamics of Policy Processes and implementation

In line with Blaikie, Long (2001: 91-92) observes that the whole policy process is permeated by interface discontinuities and struggles. As such, it consists of an intricate series of socially constructed and negotiated transformations relating to different institutional domains like, humanitarian agencies and state institutions and differentially affect a variety of actors (for instance, including but not limited to displaced persons). He (ibid.) emphasizes the importance of day-to-day decisions, routines and strategies - devised for coping with uncertainties, conflicts of interests and cultural difference – for making or breaking policy.

Mosse (2005) and Colebatch (2006) also make the point that policy functions primarily to mobilize and maintain political support that is to legitimize rather than to orientate practice. Hence legal and moral duty bearers are hardly neutral in their delivery of interventions. They are primarily shaped, not by an altruistic interest in resolving the problems of displaced persons per se, but by their own interests and priorities (see

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

articles 1 & 3). As Mosse (2005: 14-16) argues, development policy ideas are important

less for what they say than for who they bring together. Development interventions are

not driven by policy but by the exigencies of organizations and the need to maintain

relationships. In a sense then, the better policy processes are at legitimizing and

mobilizing political support, the more difficult it is for them to be a good guide to action

or for them to be turned into practice. This is best illustrated in both cases where despite

agencies' best efforts, displaced persons' needs and concerns tend to be compromised

in the name of a larger good; namely security concerns; not provoking host-state

sensitivities; limited funding and logistical constraints, regional decisions and the like

(see articles 2 & 3).

These discussions make apparent the contested and constructed complexity involved in

humanitarian policy implementation practices. These practices are enamoured by

legitimising stories that are told by various actors to persuade. These contestations make

policy practices amenable to narrative analysis in order to make such dynamics apparent

(Roe 1994). This is because 'narratives serve to stabilize expectations and provide secure

moorings in a shifting and sometimes threatening world; they also perform

representative and political purposes in the exercise of power by persuasion' (Springate-

Baginski & Blaikie 2007:92; see also Blaikie 2010; Forsyth 2003; Arthorpe & Gaspar

1996; Hajer 1995; Roe 1994).

Policy Narratives and the Inclusion of Voices

Blaikie observes that:

Policy narratives are stories told by different protagonists. These are persuasive constructions with a beginning (assumptions, problem framing, choice of issues, etc.), a development (argumentation, supporting evidence, justifications, troublesome side issues, and other relevant circumstances), and a conclusion (what should be done and policy recommendations). They use some facts, are ignorant of or deselect others, and interpret information in a particular manner in order to tell a persuasive and consistent story. Narratives are used in policy-making as much as in everyday life. They are a way of making sense of an uncertain, complex and contested world. In a more strategic sense, narratives may also be a means of persuading others. In no way is the labelling of an account as narrative meant to be derogatory or to imply falsehood. On the other hand, we cannot assume that we know the actors' intentions from our interpretation of what they say (2010: 2-3; 2007).

Consequently, Blaikie cautions against, not only the uses, but the potential limits of policy narratives for understanding policy processes. '[Such] a focus on narrative in the policy process [might be] illuminating but is insufficient by itself without addressing the reflexive relation relationship between the power of the author of the narrative and the narrative itself'. 'This relationship [is revealed to] have structural aspects, such as funds for research and to command information, the means of broadcasting the narrative, networks of allies, the means of coercion to produce and publicise the narrative as well as persuasiveness – and therefore the power of the narrative itself'. That is why 'a focus on policy narratives alone will tend to privilege documents and printed matter and also the formal and well financed over the spoken narrative of

those who have poor access to a printing press, radio or politically powerful actors at different levels' (2010: 3-4). This, for instance, is indicated in article 1 (see also articles 2 & 3) and also succinctly discussed by Blaikie in terms of the conflict in Sri Lanka. What he notes is worth reproducing here:

> Access to the media and to international funding agencies or international funding Institutions (IFIs), as well as the power wielded by donors that comes with money, gives a narrative a captive audience. What happens subsequently, as the GoSL, NGOs and other actors in the field interpret and implement policies, may be a completely different matter (2010:3).

In so doing, 'other accounts of preferences or [even acute concerns of the less powerful ones on whose behalf policies are implemented], are frequently not heard [and easily get] buried under official narratives' (*ibid*., p. 4). A common practice is to frame issues in ways that focus on some issues but exclude others. Thus, some voices, even if expressed, may not be heard, and even if they are heard they may be unable to join the negotiating table since their knowledge may not be deemed by more powerful actors to be worthwhile or legitimate. Thus their spaces of participation might become radically reduced, an issue which is perhaps most candidly illustrated by the aborted refugee protest discussed in article 2. Simultaneously, various actors are often fixated on policy and attendant practices without due regard to lived realities as perceived by affected populations (see also article 1 & 3).

Concluding Reflections

Readings in critical geopolitics, development, progressive and feminist geographies, have afforded me sensitising concepts for thinking about various ways in which space is produced and contested by various actors in the search for solutions to displacement. Actor-oriented perspectives have also helped reflect on the spaces of participation afforded displaced persons in efforts at resolving their displacement in ways that transcends the rhetoric of their inclusion to actually embedding their views if sustainable solutions can be attained. In what follows, I present some reflections that draw these concepts together as they are used in the various articles and in the study as a whole. To explore policy articulations about and the extent of inclusion of displaced persons in resolving their protracted displacement, I have drawn on the theoretical lenses of actor-oriented perspectives and the production of socio-spatial space. Such a focus, it is argued, is important for various reasons. One proposition is that, any solutions to protracted displacement which pays lip service to the inclusion of displaced persons and undervalues their agency in maneuvering within the opportunities and constrains imposed by their displacement, might succeed in imposing a set of solutions but cannot be sustainable in resolving the problem.

A consideration of certain ways of producing socio-spatial relations, has offered me tools for thinking about the importance of concepts like territory, nation-state and home in the search for and implementation of solutions to displacement. Actor-oriented perspectives have then helped to reiterate that displaced persons, like all

social actors, are heterogeneous but capable agents who actively engage with the strictures imposed by their displacement. These perspectives have thus highlighted the need for their perceptions to count if viable solutions can be found.

Such a constructionist view of agency takes seriously the need for displaced persons to be an active part of the search for and implementation of solutions to their displacement. To this end, rights are viewed as a means of enabling meaningful participation within the politico-socio-economic constraints imposed by displacement and attendant issues. A few of these issues being the varied implications of protractedness; the predominance of state/host-interests and donor exigencies in the implementation of solutions; limitations of humanitarian assistance; displaced persons' own ambivalences that might encourage or impede a resolution of their displacement, to mention a few.

Rather than reifying displaced persons' perceptions as if it was all that mattered, this perspective offers a useful way of negotiating, to various degrees, the romanticized fixity and flow or the duality of bounded structure and unbounded agency often associated with ideas about spaceplace, territory, nation-state and home; ideas which have so much salience in the policy practices deployed in search of solutions to displacement.

Discussions about the production of space have helped highlight certain ways in which socio-spatial space tends to be perceived, conceived and practiced by various actors in an attempt to resolve protracted displacement. Whilst there are numerous expressions of socio-spatial space, territorial state space tends to dominate the ways in

which space is produced to the exception of other spaces. Such static conceptions and perceptions of space can be unnecessarily attached to what has been described as the 'territorial trap'. This naturalises modern state-space as territorially bounded. The effect is that sovereignty is/becomes equated with the territorial nation-state-space within which protection is afforded those who belong, whereas those outside are often excluded. Security then becomes a means of defending the integrity of state territorial space from dangerous outsiders. According to this construction, people are rooted to places where they belong and outside which they must be afforded international protection until such a time when they are restored to their roots for their lives to be normal again. Such persons are considered to be out of place or displaced until they are restored to their arboreal rooted states or places of origin. Yet, reality and displaced persons seem to context the sedentary model upon which displacement policy is constructed by states and formalized in rights and policy such as the right to return and voluntary repatriation.

Drawing on Massey, I have considered space and place as mutually constituted and socially constructed in that both are constituted through social relations and social practices. Concomitantly, they are both constituted and produced through materiality, meaning and practice (Cresswell 2009). Viewed this way, place would not be so much attached to boundedness as it is to open and porous networks of social relations. Thus whilst recognizing the importance of place, and by extension, territorial forms in ensuring a socio-economically viable life, as well as some peoples' own need to belong to places; such a conception, most importantly, guards against viewing spaceplaces as

fixed, closed; but as always under construction and thus of multiple-becoming and of coexisting heterogeneity. As has been discussed, attention to the multiple ways in which socio-spatial space is practiced would be more attentive to people, including displaced ones, as heteregneous but capable social actors who are knowledgeable. Addressing this from another angle, it has been argued that people move or stay rooted to ensure their ontological security. This way, home could be more constructively viewed, neither as rooted places to which people must necessarily return in order to have a meaningful life, nor as routes from where they would continually be on the move. This would encourage an attention to doing, to the multiple ways in which places and homes *become* through what we do in, through and with them.

Translated into the search for solutions, the emphasis would then shift from return as the most viable solution to displacement to a more holistic focus. The emphasis would not only be on deferring to powerful state and geopolitical interests, but on a complimentary approach to implementing all three solutions. The focus would then be on the best ways to resolve protracted displacement in concert with displaced persons without whose input any talk of voluntariness becomes mere rhetoric.

However, it has been discussed that essentialist notions are what commonly drive the search for solutions to displacement. These pander to fixed and closed visions of spaceplace. Here structure impinges on agency in a unidirectional direction so that territorial and nation-state interests hold sway in the search for solutions. These attend to rooted assumption about home, recasting rights to a socially, economically,

politically fulfilling life as citizenship. Since displaced persons, even those within their own state borders are often outside the protective remit of their state (the latter often being the source of their displacement in the first place), they fall through the citizenship cracks so that their rights are compromised and their meaningful participation in the search to their displacement, co-opted. As a result, there is an undue emphasis on return, often phrased as voluntary repatriation, as the best solution to restoring the broken link between displaced persons and their roots. Rather than be an act initiated at the freely expressed will of displaced persons, return becomes a tool for getting these back to their rooted homes and thus out of the radar of international concern.

Importantly, the insistence on enforcing return against all odds and normally before conditions are favourable for it, risks *refoulement* which violates the rights of displaced to be free from forcible return. It also reveals an inordinate concern for the interests of states of origin, first and third country host states, and a general trend that favours keeping displaced persons, especially those from the so-called third world, away from the ever-tightening borders of the so-called first world. Unfortunately, policy practices in the area of resolving displacement tend to be burdened by such geopolitical interests at the expense of displaced persons' concerns. Also such policy practices are easily burdened by assumptions about displaced persons preference of solution, especially resettlement, being informed by economic interests rather than their protection concerns so that their views are just as easily dismissed as unreasonable and inconsequential.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

A discussion of policy narratives helps make apparent the storytelling dynamics and power interests behind such policy implementation and practices. Rather than address the combined interests of the displaced and the agencies in charge of them, policies then become tools to persuade as to the importance of certain policy practices like enforced repatriation in the search for solutions which are supposed to be voluntary. A common practice then is that the views of the not-so-powerful, even if expressed, get sidelined. Thus in the emphasis on return or voluntary repatriation as the best solution to displacement, it is found that ,displaced persons' rights and inclusion, rather than be enabling, are actually (mis) appropriated and thus denied. As highlighted in all three articles, their views, if expressed, are muted in favour of what are considered to be higher and more important geopolitical and other interests.

What all these discussions make apparent is that, any talk of voluntariness and inclusion of displaced persons in the search for solution to their displacement remains largely theoretical in practice. This will be the case until concrete measures are taken to transcend rooted assumptions that link them to specific places whilst accepting the numerous and divergent ways in which displaced persons do contest and cooperate ingeniously with the constraints of their protracted displacement in order to find an end to this spectre. It has been suggested that a useful way to transcend the root/routes dichotomy is to pay attention to displaced persons' concerns about their ontological (in) security which might better explain their decision to remain rooted and/or en route.

What emerges from the cacophony of voices and perceptions they expressed, in the case of IDPs, is for there to be peace (not just an end of war but of also of the conflict) before any thought of a solution could be viable (article 1). Refugees have also forcefully, if in muted tones, indicated their willingness to engage in the process of finding a solution to their displacement if only there is a will to engage with their expressed views. No matter how unreasonable their views are considered to be, efforts need not only be expended on enforcing their return, but doing so in ways that are sensitive to the conditions in the country of origin, the host country and their extended stay in exile (articles 2 & 3). What remains then is the will to take on board the plethora of view expressed and the will to act beyond the rhetoric of their inclusion in the search for solutions to their protracted displacement (articles 2 & 3). In the next section, I introduce and synthesise the compilation of article that has served as the basis for the preceding discussions and present some final concluding reflections.

[xxi] The elision of the hyphen that would usually separate space-place is adapted from May & Thrift's treatment of Time-Space as TimeSpace. They do so in recognition of the dyadic or mutually-constituted relationship between the two, suggesting that there is no fundamental difference in theorizing about them (cf. May &Thrift 2001; Kitchen 2009). The same is the case with contemporary thinking about space and place which view them as mutually constituted and working in conjunction with each other, rather than as interlinked but separate, (see Massey 2005). Wherever spaceplace is used in this text, it denotes the constitutive relationship between the two and a more progressive conceptualization of both as open and interconnected and in constant transformation.

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xxii A nation here is to be read as a 'homogenous cultural community' to be provided 'with their dominant source of collective identity' by means of a state. The latter supposedly has 'a unitary apparatus of government that exercises ultimate control over a given territory' within which it claims a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence (see Turton 2002:22; Walters 2004; see also Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1992; Brubaker 1992; Bauman 1998)

xxiii I am indepted to Dr. Lorenzo Cañás Bottos for pointing me to this insightful read by Ghassan Hage.

xxiv It is worth noting that scholars defer on the conceptualization and definition of resistance. Pile & Keith's (1997) definition of resistance drawing on de Certeau (1984) is insightful. From their perspective, resistance is less about particular acts, than about the desire to find a place in the power-geography where space is denied, circumscribed and/ or totally administered. The implication, Piles says, is that 'resistance comes from a place outside of the practices of domination' (1997:15). A further import of this is what Rigg asserts that, resistance and domination are inherently ambiguous and ambivalent; so that ordinary peoples' resistance practices are often an uncomfortable combination of actions and activities which set out – seemingly at one and the same time – to challenge, support, undermine, reinforce, stabilize and corrode existing power structures, hierarchies and processes (2007:168).

xxv On conditions at the detention camp in Kodeabe Youth camp, see (Myjoyonline 2008; Chester 2008; Sullivan & Chester 2008; Sarfo-Mensah 2009)

Synthesis and Final Conclusions

In this section, I give a brief overview of the articles and their relation to the preceding discussions. I also reflect briefly on the process of presenting the work in articles and an overview section. I then present the articles as they are published. I also synthesise the articles, and offer some reflections as a means of concluding.

Preferably, the synthesis of the articles would be done separately from the final summary and conclusions. That would have required separating the former and the latter into two chapters, and presenting the articles in between. That would also have required standardizing the styles of references, the footnotes, citations and presenting the list of references from the articles and the overview together. For various practical reasons however, this was not done. Rather, these two parts are put together and the articles presented after the final concluding reflections and reference list of just the overview. Ideally, it is suggested that the reader maintains the separation by reading the synthesis, proceeding to the articles and coming back to the final summary and concluding reflections. Whilst this is unfortunately cumbersome, it will afford a clearer picture of the relation between the articles and the various parts of the overview.

This thesis consists of three articles addressing different aspects of policy constructions about resolving protracted displacement in the context of displaced persons' rights. Two of the articles are published in an international journal, and one, which was under review at the time of initial submission of the thesis, is currently an article in press in another international journal. Attanapola (2005), Owusu (2005), Azmi (2008) and Tagseth (2010) have discussed some of the benefits and challenges of presenting the

thesis as a collection of articles and a general overview as opposed to a monograph. After sustained discussions with my supervisor, the decision was arrived at to present this work as a compilation of articles with an overview. It has been an instructive but challenging process. Valuable and critical feedback from reviewers and editors helped to refine arguments, as did dissemination of parts of the work at different local and international fora. Almost all the articles are based on conference presentations that helped to identity relevant sub-themes to be developed further for possible publication. For instance, the author started writing a paper for an upcoming conference which turned out to be closely related to the wider project. At the fine suggestion of our supervisor, this was completely reworked and converted into an enlightening joint collaboration between the author, the supervisor and her colleague. This resulted in article two which, as later discussed, bridges the two other articles rather well.

However, the process of writing an article through to the publication stage is often quite prolonged. In fast-changing contexts like the ones studied, this means that information is quickly outdated and needs to be constantly updated in the overview sections. Journal restrictions on space also means that ideas can often not be fully laid out, so as indicated earlier, repetitions in the overview sections becomes unavoidable. Also writing for various audiences and attending to the mostly constructive but sometimes conflicting reviewers' requests, might take an article in a direction that might be marginal to the objectives of the thesis. Simultaneously carrying out fieldwork, writing articles or responding to queries whilst working on the overview can

also be challenging in ensuring coherence between the two parts, in clarifying and updating information and concepts. On the whole however, it is often a constructive process. In the following, I present the list of articles as they are published.

Article one (Tete 2010 [2009]) is entitled 'Whose solution?: Policy imperatives vis-à-vis conflict IDPs' perception of solutions to their displacement situation in Sri Lanka'. It was published as part of a special issue in the *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography,* Volume 63, Issue 1 , March 2009 , pages 46 – 60. It was also published as a book chapter under the same title in: Blaikie, P.M. & Lund R. (Eds.) 2010. The Tsunami of 2004 in Sri Lanka. Impacts and Policy in the Shadow of Civil War. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York.

Article two (Lund et al 2011) is 'Beyond the Knowledge-Action Gap: Challenges of Implementing Humanitarian Policies in Ghana and Uganda'. This was published in the *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography,* Volume 65, Issue 2, June 2011, pages 63 – 74.

Article three (In press) is '*Any place could be home'*: Embedding refugees' voices into displacement resolution and state refugee policy'. This article is currently published online in *Geoforum* (2011), doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.07.009 .

In the proceeding section, I synthesise the articles and their relation to each other. This is done starting with article two and not in chronological order.

Synthesis of Articles

The second article discusses the challenges of implementing humanitarian policies on behalf of displaced persons. This serves as a contextual and conceptual backdrop that links the first and third articles; the latter two feature the perceptions of Tamil IDPs in Sri Lanka and Liberian Refugees in Ghana respectively, about the solutions they consider viable in addressing their protracted displacement situation. The article makes apparent the fact that various social actors are often fixated on policy and attendant practices without due regard to lived realities; demonstrating that the voices of affected people are often muted or ignored in the implementation of humanitarian policies. It then highlights the importance of consultations and consensus-making processes, emphasising the need for a re-mapping of the policies and practices of humanitarian aid. The empirical material on Liberian refugees draws exclusively on data from Tete, and that on Uganda draws exclusively on the data from Khasalamwa; whereas the introduction, methodology, analysis and conclusion were integratively written by all three authors (Khasalamwa, Lund, & Tete 2011). Thus as agreed on by the authors and noted in the article, it is of equal authorship with author names presented alphabetically[xxvi].

The first and third articles then explore respectively, IDPs' and refugees' views about the solutions implemented on their behalf as well as their conceptions about home. Their views are counter-posed to dominant government, implementing agencies' constructions and practices around the right to return and solutions to displacement. Both articles indicate an urgent need for policy discourses and practices to move

beyond mere rhetorics to actually listening to the right-bearers for whom such policies are designed.

Brief reflections on a particular reading of the principle of the right to return, has served as a unifying thread through the three articles. Considering this principle together with certain essentialised representations and practices, has helped elucidate the emphasis on return or VR as the best solution to displacement even when the situation indicates otherwise. These concepts have also highlighted the complexities of return and the extent of inclusion of displaced persons in the search for solutions that purport to resolve their protracted displacement in a safe and dignifying manner.

Final Summary and Concluding Reflections

This thesis researched the extent of displaced persons' inclusion in, and policy articulations about, resolving their protracted displacement. Specifically, it explored the perceptions of displaced persons in Ghana and Sri Lanka (Liberian refugees and Tamil IDPs) respectively about the solutions they consider viable in addressing their protracted displacement. It examined some policy articulations and practices around displaced persons' inclusion, and the ways in which these enable and/or constrain the latter. It also assessed ways in which humanitarian interventions are addressing (or not) the concerns of displaced persons. Though not dealt with on a comparative basis, both displacement situations offered complementary and contrasting insights into practices around the search for solutions, and the extent of inclusion of displaced persons' views.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Eclectic theoretical and conceptual insights were drawn from actor-oriented perspectives and the socio-spatial production of space. They helped research certain constructions around territory, nation-state and home in the context of displaced persons' rights. Consequently, essentialist assumptions about space/place, territory, nation-state and home; as well as a particular reading of the principle of the right to return, which underpins the emphasis on return or repatriation as the best solution to displacement, were explored. Such essentialist assumptions, as well as powerful geopolitical interests, were shown to underpin the focus on repatriation as *the* best solution for refugees; a focus which often infringed on the rights and dignity of refugees. The same was the case with IDPs, where these interests resulted in an emphasis on relocation policy which compelled landless IDPs to either remain in camps or return to an area against their will during a time of war.

Studying some representations, practices around and responses to displacement thus afforded insights into various ways in which space is reproduced and contested by various actors – *viz* local/international implementers and displaced persons themselves - in the search for solutions. Certain ways in which socio-spatial space tends to be perceived, conceived and practiced by various actors to the exclusion of other spaces, was then highlighted.

A brief consideration of policy narratives was conceptually useful in demonstrating that much policy thinking and practice operates on the assumption that it is enough for 'truth to talk to power' and that 'facts' are often framed in different ways and may be seen as irrelevant by those who make or shape policies and practices. This has also

made apparent the ways in which the voices of the less powerful easily get muted in the implementation of various policies intended to be for them.

Discussions about actor-oriented perspectives however pointed, not only to helplessness, but mainly to the agency displayed by displaced persons in acting within the structures that enable and/or constrain them. They made apparent the fact that, coercion and brow- beating in enforcing policies actually co-exists with different strategies and means employed by displaced persons at various scales to resist the unpalatable, even if the result are imperceptible or negative in outcome. Taken together with more progressive imaginings of socio-spatial relations and the production of socio-spatial space, it was suggested that other possible spaces of inclusion could be made legible. Attention would then be paid to the multiplicity of displaced persons views about the diverse solutions they considered viable in addressing their displacement as well as the reasons informing their choice of one over the other.

IDPs views about the solutions being implemented at the time was that, nothing was viable in the context of violent war within which they had to operate, thus A Tamil IDP's succinct observations to the effect that:

> *In the present prevailing situation, [we are] unable to think. We see an empty*
> *situation….Nobody can do anything without peace. We will have to go to our own*
> *place, if peace should come to both parties in Sri Lanka.*

Whilst the war has ended, what no one seems to be able to confidently assert is whether the conflict has also ended or whether there really exists the will to actively

bridge the rift that has been generating the grievances conducive to further war and subsequent (re) displacement.

Similarly, refugees' views, whilst varied and dynamic, seemed to point to their desire for greater inclusion in the decision-making processes, the outcomes of which has important implications for their lives. However, what seems to pervade in their case, is a sense of limboness due to a lack of information and transparency in the options supposedly at their disposal; abandonment or invisibility to the 'powers-that-be'; and an inevitable sense of having to evacuate or getting pushed out through a very likely invocation of cessation or integration into a society with which 19 years has not ensured any sustained engagement.

A brief discussion of the importance of ontological security in displaced persons' perceptions, provided a meaningful lens through which to read their heterogeneous views with respect to the solutions they consider viable. Though this insight developed at a later stage in the work, it also made legible IDPs' concerns about solutions that were being pursued in their context. It also helped to move the debate beyond bounded territorial spaces and home as roots or routes per se. Rather, home would be seen to be filling practical as well as imaginative needs without working against displaced persons' ambivalences towards home, or even their nostalgic claim to certain homes and to making home elsewhere. In the case of Tamil IDPs, for instance, return to places of origin was envisaged though not desired under the prevailing circumstances of active war.

A qualitative method of enquiry was employed as a means of studying the subjective perceptions of different actors. The study drew on a range of short- to long-term ethnographic engagements with Liberian refugees in the Gomao-Buduburam camp in Ghana and Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya, north-eastern Sri Lanka. Various approaches to ethnography - mainly narratives or life histories, combined with in-depth interviews, observations, focus group discussions, informal conversations, photographs and secondary literature searches - helped to research the issues of concern. A consideration of the methods employed, as well as the experiences and challenges of researching these situations, was particularly useful in reflecting on issues of power, positionality, rigour and the emotions associated with research in such contexts.

I explicitly drew on ways in which field experiences in Sri Lanka informed that of Ghana and *vice versa*. Though I intended to carry out a more extensive ethnography, the war situation earlier discussed made it impossible to continue in my case. I however benefitted from the insights this short but intense period of fieldwork afforded me (as discussed in the methodology section and in article 1). I drew on the information thus gleaned in writing one article based on Sri Lanka, which though constituting a small part of my work, is nonetheless an important part of it. Together with the Ghana aspect of the study, they have served to broaden my view of issues like some dynamics at play and constructions around space, territory, nation-state and home in protracted displacement situations; displaced persons' perceptions and ambivalences about home as well as solutions to their displacement; the extent of their inclusion in displacement

resolution practices and the various categorisations into which people are put, among other issues.

Concluding Reflections

Considering practices around and responses to both protracted displacement situations has been very insightful. It helped to understand the (sometimes conflicting) dynamics involved in the search for solutions. Some displaced persons, it would seem, contest the static model (or according to Malkki (1992), the 'sedentarist metaphysics') upon which certain displacement policies are constructed and formalised into rights and policy like the right to return and voluntary repatriation. Protractedness would seem to be one such construction of this model. This is a model which insists on people having to return to their places (even in the face of insecurity) or to go back to their rooted home for their lives to be normal. This remains the insistence despite the fact that displaced persons have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to resiliently and ingeniously adapt to conditions in various homes and engage in the process of making their lives elsewhere; even as they may aspire to return home. It would thus appear that protractedness is maintained and deliberately oblivious to peoples' display of agency, in order to reinforce the discourse on return as a necessary condition for resolving displacement. This might especially seem to be the case since displaced persons seem to aspire not only to a rooted home, but also to various other homes than the ones they are assumed to belong to[xxvii]. In line with Massey (1999), Brun (2003) and Hammond (2004)'s observation about the multiplicity and variability of

home as becoming through what we do in, with and through them; home need not necessarily be a rooted spaceplace of origin, rather it can be constructed *any place*. [And] this need not work against peoples' ambivalences about a home to which one (non) nostalgically returns.

Concomitantly, displaced persons' views are certainly diverse and contested. Attempts at listening to their voices within the dynamic circumstances in which they are often cast, are fraught with challenges. However, the fact that there is no authentic voice out there to be represented, need not prevent policy practices from being more attentive to their views or meaningful research from being done. Various approaches to ethnography, on a short and long-term basis, has provided a means of engaging with displaced persons' views. Reflexivity and honesty about the challenges and opportunities presented in the field has helped make transparent the process through which information was co-produced between researcher and participants. Consequently, a case is made for embedding the voices of displaced people affected by humanitarian policies and practices. Doing so in attempts at resolving their displacement, may lead to better informed and more contextually relevant interventions. Finally then, the call is made for moving beyond the rhetoric of, to the actual inclusion of displaced persons as implied by a discourse on rights, voluntariness, and dignity. Such a move will require the will of all the stakeholders involved in really resolving protracted displacement with all its associated ills.

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xxvi Due to an unfortunate error in the information feed at the proof stage of this article, the agreed alphabetical listing of author names was incorrectly entered as Lund, Khasalamwa & Tete 2011. To

reflect the principle of equal authorship, and account for the discrepancy, the alphabetical listing is maintained in this thesis with few exceptions. Each author might also list themselves as first author of the article in their respective works with due acknowledgement of equal authorship.

[xxvii] I particularly wish to acknowledge Dr. Axel Baudouin for his pithy suggestions and all the members at the final internal departmental seminar, for pointing me to some of these broader observations.

Pictures from Fieldwork

Sri Lanka

Ghana

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'*Any place could be home*': Embedding refugees' voices into displacement resolution and state refugee policy

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ABSTRACT

This article explores refugees' views about the 'durable solutions' or three Rs – Voluntary Repatriation, Local or Re-Integration and Resettlement – underscoring the need for refugees' voices to inform policy actions taken on their behalf. Central to discourses on the right to return and the policy practice of voluntary repatriation is the salience accorded the nation-state of which territorial boundaries are an important defining feature. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with Liberian refugees in the Gomoa-Buduburam camp in Ghana, this article elucidates the effects of essentialist assumptions about territory, nation-state, home and enforced repatriation on the rights of refugees. By studying practices around and responses to the so-called solutions to displacement, especially VR, insights are gained into various ways in which space is reproduced and contested by international/local implementers and refugees, respectively, in the search for solutions. Importantly, the extent to which the views of displaced persons are allowed to shape such practices is highlighted. The article concludes by encouraging an embedding of refugees' views about the three Rs into reformulating state policy expressions in displacement interventions. Including refugees as active participants in resolving their own problems, it is suggested, is one sustainable way to address the canker of protracted displacement in our times.

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1. Introduction

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offers three durable solutions or three Rs, – Voluntary Repatriation (VR) to the country of origin, Local or Re-Integration (Li) in the first country of asylum, and Resettlement in a third country of asylum as a means of resolving protracted displacement. Concerns of Liberian refugees in the Gomoa-Buduburam settlement in Ghana (the camp) are examined pertaining to these proposed solutions, and the effects an insistence on VR has on refugees' rights. What are these concerns? How are the rights of refugees being matched with policy preferences and being addressed in a way that is sensitive to refugees' needs whilst satisfying policy choices? Given the so-called durable solutions and the policy preference of VR *vis-à-vis* the right of refugees to return at their freely expressed will, does the voice of the displaced matter in the decisions that so profoundly affect their lives? By studying practices around and responses to what are presented as solutions to displacement, especially VR, insights are gained into various ways in which space is reproduced and contested (Kitchin, 2009) by international/local implementers and refugees, respectively, in the search for solutions.

UNHCR recognises that each refugee situation requires a comprehensive and complementary approach which considers the appropriateness of all three solutions (UNHCR, 2008a); however, VR remains the most preferred policy solution (UNHCR, 1996). Among other reasons, powerful states' interests (Loescher, 2001), even "nationalist ideology" (Allen and Turton, 1996, p. 1) have been cited as the rationale behind this emphasis on VR. State-centric arguments about the importance of bounded territories and state-interests over that of displaced persons'[1] views are pervasive (Betts, 2008a,b). However, there are different trajectories to the state-centric story (Massey, 1999). Arguments pointing to an urgent need to include refugees as active participants in resolving their own problems are also well-established (Harrell-Bond, 1986, 1989; Allen and Turton, 1996; Hyndman, 2000; Riess, 2000; Loescher, 2001; Collyer, 2005; Chimni, 2009) and no less important than differing but interrelated state-centric views.

The present call to embed displaced persons' voices in the search for and implementation of solutions is not new. The

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[1] The non-synonymous but interrelated terms 'displaced persons' and 'forced migrants' encompass a broad range of politico-legal categories of persons forced to flee their homes for various reasons, including refugees. In this article, the two terms are used interchangeably, and specifically refer to refugees or the broadly-defined range of persons forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence or persecution, and have crossed an internationally-recognised border.

importance of engaging with displaced persons' views has forcefully and repeatedly been made. Studies have emphasised that displaced persons, like any social actors, are heterogeneous but capable agents. They are best placed to articulate and evaluate efforts at responding to their own needs in ways that foster ownership and sustainability of programmes implemented on their behalf (Essed et al., 2004; Dona, 2007; Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 2007; Brun and Lund, 2010). Consequently, there has been cautioning against treating displaced persons as "speechless emissaries" (Malkki, 1996, p. 390), who are a dehumanised, sub-citizen mass consigned to "pictorial representations of suffering and need" (Rajaram, 2002, p. 251; Hyndman, 2000). In common with the preceding authors, I acknowledge the diverse views of refugees as active subjects of their own life capable of articulating their own needs. Through ethnography and a life history approach, I sought to engage refugees' subjective perceptions as knowledgeable participants whose views matter in the search for solutions to their own problems; [and] to let these views inform my theoretical, and analytical constructs. The multiplicity of refugees' views, the situated nature of the research encounter and knowledge produced, however, need not detract from letting the experiences of refugees inform the implementation of policies on their behalf (Brun, 2001; Horst, 2002, 2006).[2]

It is generally accepted that the person leaving her/his country may do so for various reasons, be it proactive/reactive or voluntary/involuntary (Richmond, 1994; Van Hear, 1998). There is however wide acclaim and an assumption that return is usually "motivated by a desire to return home, to the place where one belongs, to his or her roots" since "there is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's 'native' land" (read homeland) (Agterhuis, 2005, p. 4). Undoubtedly, the emphasis on VR as the most durable solution is born out of an insistence that return to one's root is the best way to redress the situation of those in exile (AI, 2001). This assertion is not baseless; but when it dictates so much of what is implemented as policy on behalf of the displaced, it is worth asking if return is indeed desired, advisable and/or possible for these persons.

Central to the policy focus on VR is the principle of the 'right to return' and the salience accorded the nation-state or sovereignty of state systems. These strong policy discourses along with essentialist conceptions about territory and 'home' reinforce the view that return, even in protracted displacement situations (PDS), is the best course of policy action. I will briefly discuss the 'right to return' in refugee policy practices in order to make explicit some of these concepts and the primacy of VR in resolving displacement. I will then consider the theoretical perspectives and methodology employed in this study; and the empirical evidence underpinning the discussion.

2. The right to return and refugee solutions

In a broader sense, the 'right to return' is part of the freedom of movement which can be both internal, within a country and external, between states (UN, 1948; OHCHR, 1976). Refugees, by definition, should be able to enjoy the freedom to move either inter- or intra-state. However, exercising this right to enter or return, especially between states, moves beyond the individual to invoking issues of nationality since states exercise their sovereign right to regulate movement in accord with their own laws on and conditions of admission/readmission (Liu, 2008). Return is thus usually presented as the normal thing to do whereas the right to leave and enter another country is strictly regulated. However, host states that have admitted refugees to their territory are expected to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* (protecting refugees from being returned to places where their lives and freedom may be threatened).

Even if refugees desired return, certain conditions must be in place for this right to be ensured since its exercise is necessarily related to that of other rights. Bradley (2007) observes that safety, property restitution and reconstruction as well as an environment conducive for sustainable return and reintegration (including respect for human rights, education, access to health and social services, income-generating opportunities, non-discrimination and possibility for political participation), are all vitally important. Central to the discourse on the rights of refugees is that return be *voluntary*, and be carried out in safety and in dignity.[3] Refugees should be able to choose between the options offered as a solution to their displacement. In effect, the right of refugees should not be restricted solely to return. The whole idea of refugees returning is complicated, by the salience accorded the sovereignty of state systems. Yet, even when refugees desire to return to their countries of origin, careful consideration of their preferences *vis-à-vis* the implementation of VR presents a more nuanced picture and begs caution.

VR is the policy preference for Liberian refugees in Ghana who have been displaced for over 18 years due to more than a decade (c. 1989–2003) of intense and intermittent conflict in Liberia between increasingly divided factions. These wars peaked in the periods of 1989 to late 1990, 1992 (Operation Octopus), 1996 (3rd World war or 'April 16'), and 2002. An interim government under Amos Sawyer was established from 1990–1994 after peace talks were held by powers in the West African Sub-region. Charles Taylor became President of Liberia after the signing of the 1996 Abuja II Peace Accords and 1997 elections. Yet in 1998, 1999, 2000, different Liberian factions made brief incursions into various areas of Liberia (SIDA, Evensmo et al., 2000). In 2005, democratic elections were conducted and the first elected female African president, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson came to power. With the elections came the attendant expectation, even if subtle, that return is the best course of action.

Apparently, the 2005 conduct of elections and the need for sacrosanct 'national' reconstruction, *inter alia*, is claimed to be making the promotion of VR more viable. However, the failed history of actively promoted VR to Liberia in 1997 actually calls for a pause even under a democratically elected government (UNHCR, 1999). Embedding refugees' voices in the search for solutions is important for ensuring that more than just lip service is paid to the 'voluntariness' of return/repatriation and a respect of refugees' basic human rights. 'Voluntary' does suggest that their contribution to the return process is vital. I now consider the exclusionary geographies of bounded spaces as expressed through ideas on territory, nation-state and home and the effects these have on displacement policy practices such as VR. Importantly, the extent to which the views of displaced persons are allowed to shape such practices is highlighted.

3. Effects of territory, nation-state and home on displacement policy practices

3.1. Static productions of territorial (nation-) state space

Territory is a particular geographical and historical expression of political organisation and thought; and "a historically specific political form of (produced) space." (Brenner and Elden, 2009,

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[2] See Section 4 on methodology.

p. 363; Kuus and Agnew, 2008; Delaney, 2005). According to Brenner and Elden (2009, p. 364), "concepts of state, space and territory are intertwined in that each term implies the other both analytically and historically". Thus, just as an account of territory must inform any theory of state space, no theory of territory can be complete without an account of both the modern state and its role in the production of space. Lefebvre's (1991) discussion about the *production of space*, especially his distinction between material, abstract and lived space, can be particularly helpful in thinking about the ways in which displacement policy remains attached to certain state-centric ways of seeing to the exclusion of other spaces. In what Agnew (1994) referred to as the 'territorial trap', he laid bare some enduring geographical assumptions by means of which the territorial boundedness of modern state space has been naturalised. Agnew also decried the seemingly innocent equation of the nation with the territorial state as a result of which the latter has been considered as "container of society", "expressing and representing the… 'will' of the nation" (p. 59).

Thus coupled, the modern nation-state, a peculiar modern form of territorialisation associated with sovereignty, aspires to a linear, totalising position. Territory, Delaney posits, is often deployed as "a means of controlling 'what is inside' by limiting access or excluding others" (2005, p. 19). Hence, security becomes an issue of defending the integrity of the state's territorial space from dangerous outside others (Agnew, 1994). There is a conflation of citizenship with residence within the boundaries of a particular territorial state so that anyone falling outside constitutes a threat to the sovereignty of the state (Agnew, 1994). Consequently, Kuus and Agnew argue, "a societal issue which is framed as a matter of security legitimises urgent state intervention since such an evocation designates the anarchical 'outside' against which the state is defined" (2008, p. 99). The exclusionary geographies occasioned by the territorialising or boundary drawing tendencies of the nation-state and its effects on refugees are well documented (Malkki, 1992, 1995; Hyndman, 1999, 2000; Turton, 2002; Robinson, 2002; Appadurai, 2003; Loescher et al., 2008).

Our understanding of the complexity involved in the production of space is advanced enough to appreciate territory as just one of numerous expressions of socio-spatial relations (Agnew, 1999). For the purposes of this discussion however, the static notion of the territorial state space provides a useful frame of reference. In effect, the highly fixed nature of the nation-state, central to which are the ideas of home (land), and security, defines and reinforces many of the practices for and against displaced persons. As discussed below, these static ideas have a particularly strong purchase on the search for solutions to their protracted displacement and the extent to which displaced persons' views matter in such policy practices.

3.2. The nation-state as home

Walters (2004) observes that there is an obsession with governing a nation as a home – a place which belongs to 'us' and not 'them'. This, he argues, is what furnishes the nation-state with its rationale for excluding some whilst including others. This exclusion remains a practice in the inter/national order and is integral to the potent categorisation into which forced migrants are placed.

Walters (2004, p. 241) aptly captures the particular concept of home that legitimises the "protection of the homeland in a world of dangerous mobilities". Home then is 'our' place, where we belong naturally, and every people should have (at least) one. It is this very conception of home that confers the label refugee as one who is uprooted from their home, having crossed an international border and thus outside the nurturing care of a mother state. This sit-

uation automatically confers upon refugees the status of orphans needing international protection until such a time when they can return to their home for life to be normal. Carried further, it is this same idea which seeks to keep people home as internally displaced persons, assisted in their homeland so as not to disturb their place in this natural order of things (Turton, 2002; Hyndman, 2007). Home then becomes a discursive tool which the powerful use to include or exclude, to secure and to keep off or kick out the unwelcome as they please. This is evident in the statement below by Mr. Bartels, Ghana's past minister of Interior:

> Government has ….., taken a firm decision that all the Liberian refugees in Ghana return home…. Government will no longer tolerate the situation where people who have been given our hospitality continue to undermine the Security of the State. Our National Security is Supreme and shall not be compromised on any account (Min. of Interior, 2008).

Similarly, it is the idea of home as 'our place'- one we must protect, a place to be secured because its contents (our property) are valuable and envied by others; a place we may invite guests into, but only at our invitation and where they cannot stay indefinitely (Walters, 2004, p. 241) – that feeds the whole discourse on the 'right to return' home. By extension, refugees whose countries of origin are perceived to have returned to democratic rule are expected to return and take up the dogged challenge of rebuilding 'their' home and are also to do so as a sign of goodwill towards their host; lest they overstay their welcome. This expectation for Liberian refugees' return is currently true in Ghana. A UNHCR official's claims about the (im) possibility of LI are apt:

> LI is more of a political decision because the government has to decide to grant rights to about 20 to 30,000 people who may enjoy almost the same, if not equal rights as Ghanaian citizens; then it is a decision to be taken carefully. This is the case everywhere in the world. For example, no matter how big and rich the US is, nobody can just decide they want to live there and get a green card (UNHCR Interview 2007).

This same logic grants the host government an argument that 17 years of stretching its meagre resources to accommodate and make refugees comfortable is a feat to be praised, if not celebrated. At the same time, it boldly claims that security considerations make it impossible to continue hosting a people whose state is democratically on its feet and badly in need of its nationals to build it up. The Ghanaian Minister further asserted:

> Refugees have a responsibility to respect our Laws as well as refrain from subversive activities against the State, which has given them a home for the last eighteen years….Today there is absolute peace in Liberia and its citizens continue to return home without fear… Liberia has been peaceful for over 5 years and over 1 million refugees have returned home (Min. of Interior, 2008).

And who can contest such a view, when we live "in a world where rights are apportioned on the basis of territorially anchored identities" (Kibreab, 1999, pp. 2, 4)? Thus, to the extent that state space continues to be conceived and perceived within policy circles and in practice as *the* home to which refugees must be attached, or return to at all cost, other spaces of inclusion are easily co-opted and rights trumped up.

3.3. Home – roots and/or routes?

Blunt and Dowling (2006) and Brun and Lund (2008) discuss that both the material and the imaginative constitute home so that home, Brun indicates, "is continually in the making and is not a fixed and static location" (in press, p. 4). Whilst concurring to the

multifacetedness of home, a dichotomy is sometimes still maintained between a home 'there' of marginalisation and a 'real' home of empowerment in the place of origin (Azmi and Lund, 2009, p. 46). Yet, especially in the case of youth who have never been to or left Liberia at a very young age, an assertion that home for them is Liberia must draw on an imagined nation-as-home. Their views must be reinforced by their parents' or guardians' memories and emotions of a past material space that also has strong affective connotations and has been formative of their personal identities. This is no doubt heightened by their continued alienation in the host community where they feel a strong inclination to maintain 'a home away from home' on the camp. Among other things, this has been due in part to some refugees' inability to speak the local language, find jobs, and the continued animosity some Ghanaians express towards them.

Refugees do nostalgically articulate the desire to return home to their places of birth. Consequently, refugees might be said to be complicit in the configurations that threaten to tie them to specific places and homes. Importantly, they aspire to various other 'homes' and to making home elsewhere. A refugee youth said: 'any place could be home' (LH 10 2007), pointing to the need for a more pragmatic view of home as a place where one makes it (Graham and Khosravi, 1997; Brun, 2008). Home in this context would be a place that fills practical needs rather than a place of origin that confers rights and/or becomes a nostalgic ideal to be attained through VR or return.

Indeed several studies on refugee returns have challenged the notion of a fixed geographical home where people dream of returning when obliged to leave (inter alia, Malkki, 1992; Stepputat, 1994; Behar, 1996; Turton, 1996; Zetter, 1999; Black and Koser, 1999; Black, 2002; Hammond, 1999, 2004). Rather, home is constructively to be viewed as "a variable term, one that can be transformed, newly invented, and developed in relation to the circumstances in which people find themselves or choose to place themselves" (Hammond, 2004, p. 10). This variability runs counter to ideas of an essentialised rooted place or home of birth naturally apportioned to an individual within bounded territorial entities, and to which one must inextricably be attached to have a normal life. The burgeoning literature on transnationalism (Smith, 1994; Basch et al., 1994; Hyndman & Walton-Roberts 2000; Hage, 2005; Silvey et al., 2008), among others, has challenged and added to the mass of knowledge about rooted homes and territories as bounded spaces.

I am inspired by Hage's (2005) argument that roots ought not tie people to specific spaces. He argues that it is because people are feeling existentially stuck that they initiate physical movements even if they are not sure what lies in store for them at their destination. It may be argued that Hage's views do not apply to refugees because he is addressing movement that defines the diasporic condition, specifically transnational Lebanese migrants who made the choice to move to geographically dispersed locations. However, Hage's generally applicable insights move the argument beyond roots or routes per se in refugees' perceptions about home. His insights provide a counterpoint to the essentialised emphasis on return home within the bounded confines of a naturalised territory as the best solution, and provide a meaningful lens through which to read refugees' perceptions about viable solutions to their protracted displacement. Hage's argument might well explain some refugees' insistence on resettlement or (non) preference for LI as the best solution. Though a number preferred other options to returning, some have repatriated and continue to do so by choice or in the absence of what they consider to be a lack of further outlets. What is evident is the way in which these varied decisions seem tied to refugees' ontological security. In the discussions below (see Section 5), ontological security concerns become clear in the participants' diverse enunciations about why they prefer one solution to the other.

4. Methodology

The qualitative data which is the basis for this discussion was solicited starting in 2004 (Tete, 2010a) and was updated in the course of fieldwork from 2007 to 2010. Ethnographic data consisting of over 40 semi- and un-structured interviews, about 15 of which were life histories (hereafter LH), were conducted with some Liberian refugees in the camp. The latter begun from May to July 2007 when I stayed for two months in the camp; other field visits were done in December 2007–January 2008; April/May 2008; and during a final validating trip in December 2009–January 2010, all of which totalled about four and half months of fieldwork. The views of other actors were sought through key informant interviews with UNHCR-Ghana, the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB[4]); Camp management officials; the Liberian leadership committee; some Community Based Organisations (CBOs); other agencies and stakeholders, as well as through informal conversations.

These interviews were to elicit refugees' concerns resulting from their displacement, especially about the right to return vis-à-vis the ways in which government/humanitarian agencies were acting (or not), to provide solutions the refugees considered relevant. Specifically, interviews helped explore some refugees' subjective perceptions about solutions to their protracted displacement, particularly the policy emphasis on VR as the best solution. My enquiry also included questions regarding pre-, during-, post- displacement experiences and future aspirations in order to gain a contextualised understanding of the refugees' displacement experience, the ways in which they were assigning it meaning, and the ways in which this was influencing their choice of a solution.

Participants were selected through a snowballing method aided by my prior research in 2004; through participants' recommendations, and on one occasion, through a helpful UNHCR official's suggestion. Such a selection could potentially introduce bias and cannot be taken to be representative of the views of entire refugee population or of refugees elsewhere. I have sought methods that create space for some refugees' situated but nonetheless consequential knowledges (Pain et al., 2010). Whilst I lay no claims to speaking for refugees or on their behalf, I at least hope to highlight a few of their fragmented and partial views in the camp in Ghana, recognising that there is no unitary refugee voice. By selecting participants from a range of displacement experiences, solutions and themes, however, I hope that the lessons drawn will have "exemplary value", which whilst specific to the Liberian refugee context, might be drawn on to provide useful lessons that can be informative in other refugee situations (Angucia and Zeelen, 2008, p. 10).

Due to my focus on listening to and conveying concerns of Liberian refugees, I did not systematically research the views of Ghanaians in and outside the camp whose views were an important counterpoint to that of the refugees (cf. Dona, 2007). I however actively initiated and indirectly elicited the views of Ghanaians and followed media discussions about the Liberian refugee situation.[5]

In recognition of refugees as agency-imbued actors, who interpret the structures that act to constrain and/or enable them; also in recognition of these heterogeneous but articulate agents who are capable of contributing to the resolution of displacement, hearing refugees' views about return and solutions is important. After a brief background of the camp, I will present some refugees' views and discussions, followed by concluding reflections.

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[4] The GRB is the government agency mandated with oversight responsibilities for refugees in Ghana.
[5] Some Ghanaians who knew my research engagement with Liberian refugees were eager to offer unsolicited opinions about 'my people', sometimes reproving me for not expending energy on more productive pursuits. For a more detailed methodological discussion and reflections on my positionality, as well as my engagement with the Liberian refugee situation see (Tete, 2010b).

5. Voices of Liberian refugees in the camp and policy stances on the three RS

5.1. The camp

Liberian refugees have been in protracted displacement in Ghana since 1990. Though not an immediate neighbour to Ghana, the refugees joined Ghanaian citizens being evacuated in 1990 from Monrovia and Freetown, Liberia (Tete, 2010a). The majority of refugees are in the Gomoa-Buduburam Refugee Settlement, located in the Gomoa district of the Central region. The camp is about 35 km west of Ghana's capital city, Accra. Other Liberian refugees in Ghana are in the less populated and multi-national Sanzule-Krisan Camp; in various reception centres; and self-settled in urban or various areas of Ghana. Having fled the social upheavals of civil war in Liberia, these refugees are afforded prima facie protection under the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention[6] by the Government of Ghana (GoG) with the assistance of UNHCR, its sister agencies, local implementing partners and others.

5.2. Official articulations and practices on the solutions

An initial VR, widely acknowledged to have failed, was implemented in 1997. In anticipation of the 2005 Liberian presidential elections, a VR exercise was re-initiated in 2004 and was to have officially ended in 2007. From January 2004, UNHCR started disseminating information towards facilitation of VR which began in October 2004. From February 2007, UNHCR stepped up efforts by actively promoting VR and advocating the return of refugees. A registration deadline of 31st June, 2007 was set for the end of assisted VR for Liberian refugees in Ghana. Subsequently, UNHCR-Ghana claimed that those willing to return would still be assisted on an individual basis with limited luggage allowance. UNHCR also emphasised the impracticality of carrying limited number of passengers on whole chartered vessels, stating that assisted VR will have to end at some point due to budgetary, logistical and other constraints, including a regional decision to that effect (UNHCR Interview 2007). Approximately 7013 refugees had been repatriated since 2004, with 2006 and 2007 having the highest numbers of returnees. These return numbers are modest and leave much room for improvement given the cost involved in repatriating (UNHCR Interview 2008).

GOG also asserts that in view of the socio-economic constraints faced by Ghanaians, Liberians must seriously consider returning to their relatively peaceful country to help in rebuilding efforts. Besides, GoG claims, it will be unrealistic to expect the government to reintegrate the over 40,000 Liberian refugees[7] believed to be in the camp in 2007 without substantial international assistance (Tete et al., 2011). Due to insignificant strides made in repatriating refugees, the GoG advocated for an extension in the assisted VR programme which was granted until March 2009. The extension seems to have been beneficial as it is observed that in the aftermath of sit-in protests staged by some refugees at the camp in 2008, over 8000 repatriated as of the end of 2008 alone, exceeding returns for the whole of 2004–2007 (UNHCR/GRB Interviews, 2009). Some refugees later indicated their preference for LI but GoG was yet to decide

on a plan of action. With a few exceptions, resettlement is said to have been officially closed to encourage VR (GRB/UNHCR Interviews, 2007, 2009).

The insistence on VR is especially relevant since the call of the elected Liberian president is for Liberians to return and rebuild; something she considers a major policy priority and one with which UNHCR agrees. Encouraging people to go 'home' however, may be problematic given the contested meanings attached to home, either as a place of nostalgia to which one necessarily returns for life to be normal and the more dynamic view of home as "a place where one can make it" (Tete 2010a). Refugees' conceptions about home are informed by complex, multifaceted factors that indicate shifting understandings of home under a given situation, rather than a linear idea of home as a country of origin in which to return. An 8th grader who left Liberia as a child and has never returned said:

> It's my country [Liberia] I consider home. The place your parents come from and where you were born is your home; if you get used to a place, it can also be your home. My mother's decision would count the most so if she said we should go back, then I'd have to go but since I prefer to be here, I'll do all my best to convince her so we stay here. I suggest that I should be here now because I want to go to school here, i.e. if I don't travel abroad. I also think life is safer here as no one is coming to harm me here so I should be here till I graduate (LH 11 2007).

This youth's opinions were not uncommon among his peers. As is shortly discussed, the solution preference for most refugees is resettlement, though policy practice actively promotes VR or Li at the least. The following extracts are derivations of and reflections on refugees' views about the 3Rs *vis-à-vis* the policy imperative to repatriate them. Their views illuminate questions about constructions around territory, nation-state and home, and the extent of refugees' inclusion in resolving protracted displacement.

5.3. Liberian refugees' views and choices of solution(s)

The complex reasons advanced by refugees as to the solutions they consider applicable to them, are varied. Resettlement is preferred for the opportunity it is perceived to offer in satisfying practical needs. VR in the long term is acceptable whilst LI could be an option if it was on refugees' own terms. This is a very simplified presentation of the dynamic range of views expressed. These views have however represented the crux of refugee concerns which were forcefully brought to the fore during the protests.

5.3.1. "We are in the valley of decision"[8] – return/voluntary repatriation

> Security is felt by the one experiencing it, so we cannot be forced to go. (A Refugee Woman, 2004).

In situations of protracted displacement when refugees have spent many years in exile, their choice of solution is usually informed by more than a nostalgic claim to their homeland or to a romanticised home to which one must necessarily return (Chimni, 1999). For instance, a refugee's response to the question: 'where do you consider home?' is instructive. She said:

> Home? What can I say? I would have to say Liberia because though I had vowed never to return for all the terrible things I suffered, I have come to know during these hard times here that I am not allowed to call anyplace my home except Liberia. I am

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forced to. I am not sure how safe and conducive it is now but it seems like no matter where I go in this world; the only place I'm allowed to feel comfortable, respected and secure is where I grew up (LH 3 2009).

Though the war is considered to be over in Liberia and assisted VR offered since 2004, many refugees questioned the viability of return then or in the near future. A number took advantage of the VR offer and continue to repatriate (see Section 5.2). If there is anything to be learned from earlier trends, then the mere fact that people have registered does not mean that they will actually leave. Many who registered with an earlier promoted VR programme offering a more generous transportation allowance of 50 kg by sea, failed to show up; [and] UNHCR admits not as many people have taken advantage of the offer as they would have liked (UNHCR Interview 2008).

Various reasons have been advanced by the refugees for not returning including, but not limited to, loss of family and community support systems; a perceived lack of socio-economic opportunities available in Liberia; fear of return for security reasons; and general pessimism with regards to an actual end of the war. The latter was reinforced by subsequent eruptions of war after the 1997 VR exercise and UNHCR's admission that disarmament was incomplete (Tete, 2010a). The continued presence and likely withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is anticipated to strain the fragile security forces and situation. As a refugee parent observed: 'It's not very safe in Liberia. What will happen when the foreign army, UNMIL, leaves? We want them to leave for some time and see if everything's still ok before we go' (LH 6 2008). Also, fears of personal reprisals, rumours of rampant crime and general insecurity, are a few of the reasons holding people back. Whilst the UNHCR insists that the situation in Liberia is fundamentally changed and security monitoring is very good, a single refugee mother-of-two summed up these perceptions:

> The only good thing is that there is no more war, they have stopped fighting but I don't think it is safe and . . . security there . . . is not very strong.... Some people are paying back to their enemies whom they had grudges against and carrying it onto everyone else. I don't want to go now because I'm very afraid of these people that are after me. I cannot return because those who killed my father are still there, they are now the governors of some counties. One person who is after me is still there running for senator, I don't know his intentions. Since the reasons for persecution were personal and they have power, they'll still come after me if I go (LH 13 2008).

Fears thus range from the general to the very specific. It may be easy to dismiss these fears as personal, subjective and unrealistic (Bohmer and Shuman, 2008), thereby not activating a legal protection status as stated in refugee instruments. Yet, to the extent that people feel existentially threatened by these fears, they remain strong enough reasons preventing some refugees from voluntarily returning 'home' to Liberia. Maybe such fears are not that baseless when considered in the light of a 2009 human rights report of events in Liberia. The report spoke of "mob and vigilante justice...bloody land dispute which claimed numerous lives and exposed systemic and persistent weaknesses within the police, judiciary and correction sectors...on several occasions necessitating the intervention of UN peacekeepers, among other acts of impunity" (HRW, 2010, p. 1). Apart from the strong perception that Liberia is still unsafe, several refugees objected to the discourse calling on people to return and rebuild Liberia:

> But who are they asking to return? These young ones who have never lived in Liberia, who do not know Liberia and most of whom have not done anything with their lives here? (Refugee Man 2007)

They say we should go and develop our country and we want to go but with what skills are we going to do that? If they say they want people to return, is it the misfits that they are inviting back on the streets? (Refuge Parent 2008).

In thus arguing, they at once appropriate and contest a discourse that ties them to bounded territorial spaces within (and without) which a meaningful life is (im) possible. However, others prefer to return to their country of origin, even if unsafe, with the aim of picking up the threads and in the hope of rebuilding their lives. Others are also forced by their relatives abroad[9] to return as their sources of income are curtailed. An older refugee woman's observations to that effect are noteworthy:

> There are families that are helping - our friends and relatives in the United States – that are keeping [some of] us alive here, otherwise we will be looking at another Rwanda. Sometimes you keep calling like the persistent knocker, maybe they get fed up and they send you small money . . . but . . . you go again. Some people get fed up and change their number, and then the frustration starts (LH 3 2008).

Though many anticipated returning to Liberia eventually, most envisaged getting better opportunities for themselves and/or their children in another country. More commonly, maintaining a foothold in the camp whilst shuttling to and from Liberia appeared to be the norm[10] (Tete, 2010a). This might partially explain why the numbers on the camp have not reduced considerably even after initiating VR programmes.

It must also be noted that the decision to return is not always forced, but a conscientious choice by some refugees. A participant leaving under VR said, 'We have a country to rebuild' (LH 1 2007). Some spontaneously return at great risk to their lives. The views below are also suggestive of some of the varied reasons cited for return:

> We have no choice. . . the Government has done well [for us] but now they're tired of us, they say there has been election so we should return home (Refugee Mother 2007).
> Better to be in our own country than to continue living in these difficult conditions in which we have been living here in Ghana (Returning Refugee 2008).
> If I don't go by this free programme now, I have nobody supporting me to pay my passage. . . Where can I find the money to pay for the cost of residence permit and monthly renewals? We can't even feed our children here! (LH 2 2007).

UNHCR (Interview 2009) admits that fear of persecution, uncertainty, and an overlap in implementing durable solutions, especially resettlement, could be holding many back from returning. Some returning refugees also expressed the view that the return package, initially 5 USD but now 100 USD, was too small an incentive to encourage people to take advantage of the exercise.

5.3.2. Reintegration/local integration

> To be here in Ghana...how do I work now, I've been here since 1999. . . I don't consider Ghana to be a different country. For me, Ghana is almost like Liberia (A Refugee Mother, 2004).

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[9] Some of the Liberian population are freed US slaves known as Americo-Liberians. Thus prior to the war, there was a strong Liberian presence in the US. Some participants alluded to such pre-existing links, some indicated that their friends or relatives had been resettled in the US and others had no such connections.

[10] Since official registration ceased in 2003, some refugees have returned spontaneously. The situation is also more fluid because some people at the camp are not refugees but visiting family or traders who use the transportation to and from Liberia available on the camp.

In 2008, refugee protestors made explicit their unwillingness to be integrated into Ghana. In the course of time, some refugees have articulated a number of reasons informing their decision. Many expressed gratitude to the Ghanaian Authorities for the land, relative security and freedom of movement they have had. LI for many could, however, not be an option due to the limited opportunities available to them in all their years of displacement. Notable among these was the glaring lack of jobs in and outside the camp coupled with the similarities in the ailing economies of both Ghana and Liberia. The loss and lack of documentation to support claims of previously acquired skills was another deterrent as it restricted access to various job and/or educational opportunities (Tete, 2010a). The discrimination and name-calling by some Ghanaians was also disheartening (*cf.* Sarfo-Mensah, 2009). The waves of government and public sentiments against the refugees especially during the period of the 2008 sit-in protests and afterwards, ranged from accusations of their ingratitude, to their having overstayed their welcome, to the need for GoG to send them away and their not behaving as people to be pitied. Some of these Ghanaian views are instructive:

> Your people [the refugees] are being sent back. They are planning to disperse them and they are expediting the VR so that by June/July 2008, they would have returned all of them. . . .they say they don't want to stay here so they can go (AWK, Informal Conversation 2008).
> *Wo nkorofor no, omo ho ndwo* [your people are not peaceful]. Instead of staying there quietly, they demonstrate and block streets and strip naked. Why don't they go back to their countries then?...You come to stay in somebody's country all these years and pay with ungratefulness. They should go back! (FAH, Informal Conversation 2008).

Many have also not learned to speak a Ghanaian language even though this is a pre-requisite for naturalisation. The consensus has been that they would rather stick together in the camp, making it a 'home away from home', than be disregarded by Ghanaians just because they are refugees. Others complained about Liberia's difficult living conditions and high cost of living as compared to pre-war Liberia (Tete, 2010a).

The GoG on the other hand has expressed concern about the numbers that are in the camp and the implications this could have on attempts to integrate them into Ghana. GoG claims that not only would they be a big economic burden in the absence of substantial support from the international community, but refugees could also pose a significant security threat. The latter was the rational for detaining and deporting some protestors during the protests (UNHCR, 2008b; Tete et al., 2011). The GoG reiterated that by their law-defying acts, these refugees no longer qualified for protection and had overstayed their welcome especially after elections in Liberia. It is also an important reason GoG considered closing down the camp and dispersing the residual caseload to other parts of Ghana (GNA, 2008). A refugee lady summed up the mood this way:

> We are confused. We don't know what will happen next. I can't go [to Liberia] because of fear, but they. . . will come and put us in some [Ghanaian] villages. But when I go [to the village], who do I know? So I'm praying hard that they don't come and bother us (LH 5 2008).

GoG indicates that as signatories to international and regional legal documents, LI should and will occur. However, GoG favours a verification exercise establishing individual protection concerns of the 'residual caseload' to establish who truly qualifies for LI. UNHCR is of the view that the exercise would be costly and impractical, indicating that an invocation of cessation and an end to refugee status for Liberians is actively under discussion

(GRB/UNHCR Interviews, 2008, 2009). In July 2009, a verification/profiling exercise was carried out chronicling that 70 of the current 11,108 verified refugees had opted to be repatriated, whilst 2905 had opted for LI (UNHCR interview, 2009). Ultimately, an important factor why many do not consider VR or LI as an option, is the floundering hope of making it through the resettlement programme.

5.3.3. Resettlement[11]

> As a long-term plan, I want to be resettled as I don't feel safe going back due to my former position [a high ranking police officer in Tolbert and Doe's government]. The security situation is poor so when people get desperate, they will do anything (LH 3 2007).

On the whole, less than 1% of refugees are resettled worldwide (Hyndman, 1999). This implies that very few refugees and even lesser numbers from African refugee situations benefit from resettlement (Crisp, 2003; Troeller, 2008). UNHCR insists that resettlement is finished for Liberian refugees in the sub-region except for a few special cases. Thus, any ongoing resettlement activity is only dealing with old case loads mainly for family reunification and, to a very limited extent, a few cases that may genuinely be requiring attention, as in security/protection concerns and medical reasons.

However, resettlement remains the preferred solution of the displaced majority even in cases where refugees may recognise the unlikelihood of ever accessing this option. The intractable position of many refugees currently in the camp is that, in so far as resettlement continues to be an implemented solution, it is a hope worth holding onto as if one's very life depended on it (Tete, 2010a). Their general argument is that all refugees have been traumatised, thus protection concerns should not prioritise some for resettlement over others. Newman observes:

> Permanent resettlement and its founding principle of non-refoulement . . . may afford refugees some degree of psychological assurance by implying that they should never again have to face their perpetrators or the scene of violence, and thus they may cope with their memories and experiences of violence in a setting vastly removed from that in which the trauma occurred (2003, p. 34).

Some refugees are adamant that so long as resettlement lists continue to appear on the notice boards, '*God will make a way*' for them to resettle. Due to the high numbers still present in the camp despite the VR exercise, a Ghanaian official was of the view that people could still be coming into the camp from Liberia due to the 'elusive hope of being resettled' (GRB Interview, 2007). Some refugees are also entertaining a strong belief that the whole point of the VR exercise was to coerce as many as possible to go to Liberia so that the reduced numbers on the camp could be resettled. These refugees claim resettlement happened for a residual caseload of Sierra Leonean refugees in a camp. Possibly based more on speculation and rumours than fact; resettlement nonetheless remains a conviction that is making people tarry in the camp. In her insightful study of *buufis* or resettlement dreams among Somalis in Dadaab camp, Horst (2006) also found that refugees considered resettlement to be the preferred solution and the best of all the options open to them in the future. Resettlement was a dream they kept alive. The reasons might not always seem logical or valid

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[11] Tolbert, W.R. Jnr. was an Americo-Liberian president of Liberia from 1971–1980. He was overthrown in a coup by Sergeant Doe, S. He was the first indigenous president of Liberia from 1980 to his overthrow in 1989/1990, culminating in the Liberian civil war.

from an objective point of view but they remain powerful subjective assessments influencing the decisions of some refugees. In 2004, a young Liberian refugee posited: 'I don't think it fair that my [resettlement] dreams shouldn't become a reality just because I'm a refugee'.

For many, 'home' or success is intricately linked with resettlement which they perceive will furnish them with the necessary education, skills and economic empowerment to be able to contribute now in absentia, but also enable them to return later. This dual idea of home is well captured by a refugee's assertions below:

> I consider Liberia to be home because that is where I was born, but any place could be home… anyplace where you will be ok, where you will be free. The way I feel about Ghana, it is not my home….but I will stay in Ghana because I will have the opportunity to travel to another country (LH 10 2007).

UNHCR stated in an interview that the only proposed solution refugees can really claim as their right is VR since the exercise of other solutions is necessarily constrained by sovereign states who determine whether to grant it or not. They said:

> Of the three solutions, the only right of refugees is for them to return to their country since the other two [solutions] are subject to the sovereign will of states to grant them or not (UNHCR Interview 2009).

As difficult as it may be to accept this assertion, we unfortunately live in a world where all rights, especially the rights and dignity of refuges, are subject to the dictates of sovereign nation-states, as earlier discussed. Undoubtedly, the experience of displacement is a profound one with substantial consequences for livelihoods and rights. Yet, of greater consequence is the continued importance of state territorial space in sustaining livelihoods and facilitating development in the international system of nation-states (Robinson, 2002; Kibreab, 1999). Indeed, within a territorially-defined frame of rights conferment, do refugees actually have rights and who decides how these rights are administered?

Obviously, granting these rights is easier said than done especially as they are conditioned by numerous powerful actors and discursive practices around bounded territorial spaces. Also apparent are the exclusions inherent in the perceptions, conceptions and practices associated with bounded spaces as opposed to recognition of the multiple and contested spaces of which displaced persons' views should be a part. Yet, displaced persons seem to contest the sedentary model upon which displacement policy is constructed by states and formalised in rights and policy. This is a model which insists on refugees having to return to their places of origin or rooted home (even in the face of insecurity) for their lives to be normal. That remains the insistence despite the fact that displaced persons repeatedly demonstrate their ability to resiliently and ingeniously adapt to conditions in various homes and engage in the process of making their lives elsewhere; even as they may aspire to return home. Yet a place conferring rights need not be the place of nostalgia to which one returns. Displaced persons thus seem to aspire not only to a rooted home, but also to various other homes than the ones they are assumed to belong to.

6. Concluding reflections

Some refugees have returned by availing themselves of the VR programme either by choice or as a result of feeling pressured to return. Others have returned spontaneously. Many others, however, have adopted a wait-and-see attitude which can also be a form of decision (Riess, 2000). For various reasons, they seem not to consider VR as a viable option even if LI and resettlement seem

remote. Undoubtedly, the geopolitical and legal dynamics of providing solutions demand more than mere wishes on the part of refugees. Yet in the bid to find solutions to displacement, should donor fatigue on the part of the international community, tripartite agreements, host government preferences and especially country-of-origin demands of refugees, be subsumed under the individual and indeed the collectively expressed reservations of the refugees whose dignity and rights are in question? Or will the nation-state, under the purview of the international community, prevail as 'sacrosanct' and 'inalienable' in the implementation of their preferred solutions so that the 'right' of refugees continues to be proclaimed in theory whilst very little of it actually exists in practice and even much less in the hands of those who are supposed to possess it (Castles, 2003)?

Refugees plan for multiple futures in addressing the issue of durable solutions. As Zetter (1999) suggests, more than considering the different strategies as discontinuities, an approach that seeks to bridge the various solutions will be more proactive. This, he indicates, is especially the case for LI and VR. In the meantime, however, 'home is anyplace where they will be ok and free' (see Section 5.3.3). This is consonant with Brun's (2008, p. 253) assertion that "displacement ends when they [refugees] have found a place in society: a place where they can live and make a life". As Massey (1999), Brun (2002) and Hammond (2004) observe about the multiplicity and variability of home, the latter *becomes* through what we do in, with and through them. Obviously, home need not necessarily be a rooted spaceplace or nation-state one originates from; rather home can be constructed *anyplace*; [but] this need not work against peoples' ambivalences about a home to which one (non-) nostalgically returns. This would allow for refugees' views, not about a static home-state to return to, but a home that fills practical as well as imaginative needs (Brun and Lund, 2008) and ensures the ontological securities that keep a person rooted and/or en route.

With each passing year, resettlement places seem to be decreasing or even non-existent for Liberian refugees. Yet they continue to hold onto a dream of resettlement which might never be realised. To the extent this dream affords them 'the potential of imagination … [which] can fuel action and is central to all forms of human agency', resettlement may be a hope worth holding onto (Horst, 2006, p. 146). In view of the attitude of the authorities and the refugees themselves, LI does not appear to be a reliable alternative either, even though it might be offered on a limited scale. Whilst VR is preferred by the authorities, the majority of refugees, for whom it is meant, are unwilling to take advantage of it. Some may argue that many have returned and others are still leaving. What nobody seems to be able to confidently establish, is the level of voluntariness involved in these movements.

Obviously, where desired or practical, and for repatriation programmes to be effective, all necessary measures *must* be taken to ensure that returned refugees have the conducive environment and the level of security needed to make them stay and engage in the process of rebuilding their lives. These inclusionary measures, in effect, should be non-negotiable for *any* concerned about ensuring their rights. Whilst all the concerted efforts at resolving PDSs are necessary and commendable, the need for incorporating refugees' views as fully as possible, in policies and programmes designed for them, cannot be overemphasised.

Concomitantly, a participatory policy orientation that takes into account refugees' own agency in coping and thus, prioritising their own solutions to the multi-faceted problems they contend with, is vital. After all, their full cooperation is required if such programmes are to remain voluntary and work effectively in providing solutions to *their* problems. This article concludes by encouraging an embedding of refugees' perceptions about the 'durable' solutions into [re]formulations of state refugee policy and

displacement interventions. Embedding their voices creates spaces from which refugees can participate as knowledgeable agents in the resolution of their own problems and in the long term, helps address the unwieldy protracted refugee situations of our era.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Chart of Fieldwork Periods and Activities

May-July 2007 (2 month's stay in the field) Ghana	Life history Interviews; In-depth Interviews; key informant interviews; focus group discussions; photographs; observations and extensive secondary literature searches throughout the entire fieldwork and write-up periods .
October- November 2007 Sri Lanka	Life history interviews; visits to *Poonthoddam welfare centre*, *Manik farm*, *Kalnaddinakulam relocation centre*, *Thaddankulam relocation village*, *Kandasamy Nagar relocation village* (Group discussion with CEFCO, a federation of community based organisations in 13 villages), *Kalmadu*, *Periyarkulam* (Group discussion with Rural Women's Forum , a federation of women's groups in 9 villages). Debriefing & Report- back meetings with FORUT-Vavuniya; Stakeholder meetings and livelihoods workshop with partner organisations & CBOs; photographs; observations, experiencing war; informal conversations; in Vavuniya district. Literature search in Colombo [Social Scientist Association (SSA) and Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) Libraries, and bookshops]

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

December 2007-January 2008 Ghana (Revisits)	Mainly Key informant interviews (UNHCR, WFP; GRB, Liberian Embassy; OPE [asked to consult publicly available info.]); some follow-up interviews; situational updates; photographs; Observations.
April - May 2008 Ghana (Revisits)	Period following February protests, situation tense. Some LH Interviews (continued); Follow-up visits; KI Interviews (UNHCR, GRB, Camp Management); Interviews with some (I)NGOs & International Volunteers; Informal Discussions; photographs; Observations.
January 2009- December 2010 Ghana (Revisits)	Follow-up interviews (some LH); Key Informant updates(UNHCR, GRB, New Camp Manager; LRWC); Final validation; situational updates; informal conversations; photographs; observations.
*May to July 2004 (6 week's stay on the camp) Ghana	Reconnaissance visit; life history interviews; key informant Interviews; Observations; (auto) photography, literature search.

Appendix II: Background Information on Life History participants

Participants⇨	LH 1	LH 2	LH 3	LH 4	LH 5	LH 6	LH 7
Age	Not Given	39	57	25	32	18	45
County of Origin	Not Given	Bomi	Lofa	Lofa	Grand Cru	Grand Cape Mount/ Grand Bassa	Bomi
Date of Arrival in Ghana	1994 Went to Liberia in 1995 for daughter & in 2006 on UNHCR-sponsored fact-finding mission	1998	2002 (Cote D'Ivoire previously)	1996	1997 (Previously in Guinea; Sierra Leone);	1997 (returned to Liberia after a month). Back in 2000	1996
Marital Status	Not Clear. (Frequent mention of Daughter's father in US).	Widowed	Widowed	N/A	Not married	Unmarried (boyfriend?)	Married
No. of children	1	5	6	None	4 (2 own; 2 relative's)	1	4

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Participants⇨	LH 1	LH 2	LH 3	LH 4	LH 5	LH 6	LH 7
Education /Skills from Liberia	Secretarial Science in College (interrupted by war); vocational training in accounting; Vacation jobs; invitation informal hairdressing	Junior High School graduate	Security Personnel; 2nd year University business student; Electronics in High school; trained as nursing assistant; also plumbing and refrigeration repairs	Up to 9th Grade in Liberia (Discrepancy in dates provided)	Single on Camp. (Arranged Traditional marriage to an older man at age 16 in Liberia).	3rd grade.	Teaching
Education/Employment on Camp / Skill training	Director of CBO; Skills training courses; Peace & Counselling workshops; UNHCR workshops and seminar; Training in beauty care.	Sewing, beauty care and Tie & Dye making Courses	Volunteer in Camp oversight capacity; Foster Parenting; Food distribution	Unemployed; Pushed wheelbarrow previously; Was Member of singing group; dropped out of high school and building construction course (Lack of funds)	Trading; Training as beautician / hairdresser	Dropped out of 7th grade due to pregnancy. Informal training in Sewing/ unemployed	Teacher/ Head of School (Nursery to 3rd grade)

Appendices

Participants⇨	LH 1	LH 2	LH 3	LH 4	LH 5	LH 6	LH 7
Relatives Abroad	Yes (daughter went to US in 2006 on family immigration to join her dad); Mother also in the States	Yes	Yes (Distant)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
Displacement Solution	Returned	Registered to return; but still contemplating	Afraid to return but contemplating return in 2009.	On camp; Unsure	Contemplating relocating to another country if camp is closed down. Had returned to Liberia by 2009.	Not ready to return. Wants to go to Australia or Canada. Still on camp in 2009. Mother came for her grandchild to Liberia. Needs to make it before thinking of returning (2009).	Returned

Appendix II: Background Information Life History Participants continued

Participants⇨	LH 8	LH 9	LH 10	LH 11	LH 12	LH 13	LH 14	LH 15
Age	19	17	18	17	28	25	28	32
County of Origin	Montserrado	Margibi	Lofa	Grand Bassa	Grand Cru	Margibi	Montserrado / Grand Bassa	Grand Gedeh
Date of arrival in Ghana	2002 (stayed in Cote D'Ivoire for some months before coming to Ghana but was maltreated there)	2001	1996	1990	2002	2000. (left Liberia in 1990 but went to La Cote d'Ivoire)	2004	2001 (left Liberia in 1990 for Cote d'Ivoire)
Marital Status	Single	single	Single	Single	Not married	single	Single	Not married (Girlfriend)
No. Of Children	None	None	None	None	Expecting	2	None	1
Education /Skills from Liberia	High school graduate/ informal training in radio broadcasting for a year.	Grade 3	Grade 3	N/A	11th grade/basket ball	Basic school until 8 years of age	Draughtsman in Technical school/Barber ing/High school graduate	Dropped out in 7th grade

Appendices

Participants⇨	LH 8	LH 9	LH 10	LH 11	LH 12	LH 13	LH 14	LH 15
Education/Employment on Camp / Skill training	Architectural drafting at Vocational school on Camp	JSS graduate/ Computing, modelling /Hair Braiding (Winner of camp beauty pageant)	SSS 2/Modelling (Runner-up in Camp beauty pageant)	JSS 2	Fine art Course/ Business to Togo, Nigeria	Hair braiding/informal skill as Beautician	Communication on Centre operation/Trading	Unemployed. In the GAP
Relatives Abroad	N/A	N/A	Yes (ex-boyfriend)	N/A	Yes (Ex-lady)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Displacement Solution	On camp	On camp in 2008. Untraceable in 2009.	On camp till 2008(Rumoured to have returned with mother post-protest)	On camp in 2008. Would follow mother but prefers to remain until school finished.	On camp. Intends returning but not just yet.	Not ready to leave in 2008.	Returned	On the Camp

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Appendix III a: Interview Guide for Life history Interviews- Buduburam

Objectives: (1) The current concerns resulting from their displacement and (2) displacement solutions (especially the right to return) vis-à-vis (3) the ways in which humanitarian agencies are acting (or not), to address problems the displaced consider relevant.

* The information shared will be handled confidentially. Participants should grant interviews voluntarily and can withdraw at any point in process.

<u>**Personal Information**</u>

Name (anonymised)

Age

Nationality

Place of origin in Liberia

Marital Status

No. of Children (if any)

Year of arrival in Ghana

Educational Level:

    In Liberia:

    In Ghana:

Skill (s) Training (if any)

Reason (s) for coming to Ghana

No. of travels to & from Liberia (since arrival)

      Reason (s)?

Displacement Experience

What occasioned your flight?

From where did you flee?

With whom? (Family members, others)

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Where are your parents/immediate family presently?

Where did you flee to initially?

If to Ghana, why? (Did you have any prior contacts here i.e. relatives, friends or through evacuation)

To which camp did you go immediately?

If to Gomoa-Budumburam, have you been here ever since?

Life in Country of Origin

Education / skills/ work experience?

Sentiments about Liberia/When you think about Liberia, what feelings come up or does this evoke?

Life in Liberia before, during and after war?

Personal cost of war? (optional)

Durable solutions / the 'Right to Return'

Aware of any solutions offered to refugee situation i.e. as means of bringing it to an end?

If yes, what are they?

Which of these do you prefer?

Which do you know / think to be available?

Why are you still in Ghana (even though things seem to have changed in Liberia e.g elections)?

Where do you consider home? Why?

Return or VR

Have you ever returned to Liberia? Why?

If yes, why did you come back here?

Given the choice between returning and remaining here in Ghana, which one would you choose and why?

Would you want to go back to Liberia now? Why (not)?

Whose decision (would) count (s) the most in making such a move?

Have you been considering going back to Liberia to settle and do you have any definite plans to do so?

     If yes, when will that be and by what means do you paln to do so?

     If no, why not?

What would make you want to return to Liberia and remain there?

What would be your greatest motivation (s) for wanting to return/or not?

Do you know of the situation back in Liberia now?

If yes, how did you know? / What do you know of it?

What do you hope to do when you get there?

Where do you hope to start from?

Are you confident of your ability to "pick up the pieces"/start afresh?

What would facilitate that for you?

Do you know of any official (UNHCR, Ghana Government program) call for refugees to return home?

Do you know the steps (if any) that have been taken by the authorities in that direction?

What do you feel about that?

What suggestions do you have (if any) for the programme?

<u>Reintegration</u>

How have you found/do you find life in Ghana thus far?

Do you plan to leave this camp any time sooner or later? If yes, Where to?

If you had the choice would you want to live elsewhere in Ghana other than the camp?

Do you know of any who have done that?

How do you think they are faring?

What do you feel about the Ghanaians as well as living/working with them?

Would you want to naturalise as a Ghanaian if given the opportunity?

Would you rather want to be recognized as any other foreigner living here in Ghana but not as a refugee?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Do you know the implications and responsibilities this might bring? Do you think you are ready for these?

What would help you to live comfortably/make you feel at home here in Ghana?

Are such facilities available and/or easily accessible to you?

    If no, why not?

Do you have any education/skills/training that would be useful here in Ghana?

Are you able to use them here now?

If no, what would enable you to do so?

Have you acquired or planning to acquire any additional skills that have/might prove to be useful?

What do you think will make living in Ghana possible?

<u>Resettlement</u>

Do you know of any opportunities to go somewhere else other than Liberia or Ghana?

Do you know of any programmes in place currently to resettle refugees to a third country?

Do you know of any countries that are involved or ready to accept refugees (in the West?)

Do you know how one qualifies to take part in this program?

Do you think the selection criteria and processes are fair/open? Explain.

Do you think you qualify to do so? Why?

If you have not qualified or been able to access it thus far, what do you think could be preventing/holding you back?

If given the opportunity, where would you prefer to go and why?

Do you know of any who have been resettled?

What is your relationship with these?

Do you know of any challenges they may be facing?

Do you know of any advantages they may be having/enjoying as a result of such a move?

What are your suggestions for such a programme?

If you could ask for any assistance what would that be?

From whom would you want it?

If you could make a request from the Ghana government, what would you ask?

Situation in Liberia

What do you know about the situation in Liberia now?

Through what means do you get information, if you do?

Do you think it is conducive to go back there now?

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

Do you think it is safe to go back there? How do you know?

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

Which areas do you consider safe zones now?

What informs your opinion?

What in your opinion makes these areas safe?

What are your expectations as to the conditions that must exist there?

Who do you expect to put such conditions in place?

Do you know of any reconstruction efforts currently under way in Liberia? By whom?

Who (actors) do you think should mainly be involved in such efforts? Why?

Do you think these are addressing the needs of the people for whom they are designed?

Personally, what would you need to make you settle in there?

What do you hope to do when you get there?

What do you think would make return to Liberia viable?

What programmes/policies do you expect to be in place?

Which areas do you think should be given priority/immediate attention?

Camp Life

Length of stay? Travels to and from Liberia in the period?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

If such journeys, how often? What for?

Organisations on camp

Assistance structures

      Assessment of such structures.

Opportunities / challenges on the camp?

Availability of and access to educational/skill training opportunities?

      Personal involvement in any? Obstacles?

Structures of support? (Social, religious, financial, cultural, other?)

Current Concerns and Future Aspirations

Daily activities

Daily Concerns (in which areas?)

Camp situation over time

Income? Expenditure? Savings? (optional)

Survival from day to day

Any benefits from being on camp?

Short and long-term plans?

Do you think about the future? What do you see?

Where do you see yourself in the next few years?

What goals have you set for yourself (if any) and what steps are you taking towards reaching them?

What obstacles do you foresee in reaching these goals?

Do you have any ideas as to how to counter these obstacles?

What resources by way of assistance could help you reach these?

Follow-up questions on arising issues.

Appendix III b: Interview Guide for UNHCR-Ghana

What are your responsibilities towards Liberian refugees in Ghana?

      What has this included in the past?

      After 2002 when you returned?

      Now? (In this VR period)... and

      Afterwards?

<u>VR</u>

Why Voluntary repatriation and why at this time? What factors occasioned your choice of VR now over other proposed solutions?

Which policy directive (s) favours the implementation of this option (VR) now?

For how long has the exercise been going on and who or which actors were involved in the decision to repatriate?

To what extent are the refugees themselves, not just their representatives, a part of the whole VR process?

Was the information disseminated to the refugees? If yes, how was it done? (By what means and how effective was/has this been?)

How long was this done before the actual programme started? / What preparations were put in place prior to the exercise?

To what extent were the refugees involved (if at all), in the decision- making process? How was this done?

<u>After June 30th</u>

June 30th was the time set for which registration for assisted VR was to end.

Why was this necessary?

What are the rights of refugees after 30th June (if any) and how is this being ensured?

What are the implications for not availing one's self of this provision?

Did all who registered to go have to leave by this date? If not, till when can they remain here? For what reasons?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

How are you enforcing this? What measures have you instituted to stress the finality
or seriousness of this deadline?

      What has happened since then?

How voluntary can a programme with a deadline be?

Can the deadline be extended?

      If yes, what informs such a decision?

      If no, why not?

What measures are in place to avoid repeating the 1997 problem with VR
implementation?

Any plans of withdrawing/phasing out of your activities?

<u>VR Logistics</u>

What are the means of transport to convey VR persons? Who qualifies for which and
upon what criteria (if any)

How many trips have there been thus far?

When was the most recent trip to Liberia? By what means? If it was long ago, why so?

When will the next trip be?

In the interim, what happens to those who have long registered and want to leave?

      (For e.g. those who have sold their things, have had to give up their rented
      accommodation, etc in anticipation of leaving)

      What stop-gap measures are put in place for them (if any) until they can leave?

How many kilos are they allowed and what happens with the rest of the things (assets)
acquired in the 17 yrs or so of their being here?

Is there any assistance/package to facilitate return? If yes, what is in it?

      To what extent can this help them re-establish themselves back in Liberia?

How many have returned till date?

Have they all done so through the programme?

      If yes, how many have left through it since it started till date?

      If no, by what other means have they left?

What are the implications of going through the programme (or not)?

Who qualifies to benefit from the assisted VR?

What about those without ID cards?

Situation in Liberia

What is the situation in Liberia currently?

Is it safe?

If yes, how so?

If no, why not?

To what extent has the DID programme been done this far?

Are the International forces still in place?

For how much longer will they be there?

What measures are in place to ensure protection from potential/real rebel activity upon arrival in Liberia?

What measures are in place to check the looting, ritual killings, etc that are reported?

Are all counties safe to return to? If not, how many are safe to return to now?

What factors/criteria determine which areas are considered as safe to return to?

What is lacking in the other counties or makes them unsafe to return to?

How sufficient is information provided (if any) to the displaced about these issues?

Whose responsibility is it to ensure returnees' safety?

What measures have been taken to ensure this?

Does/ has the International community have/had any role in this?

Are land/property restitution issues being addressed?

How? By whom? How has it turned out?

Is any assistance being offered to returnees upon arrival?

Any measures in place to assist those who have nothing to return to (burnt house, lost property, no family, etc)?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Reintegration

Is reintegration an option actually offered to Liberia refugees in Ghana?

Are there programmes in place to actively assist refugees to enable them re-integrate here?

If yes, who qualifies for this? Are they in a position to meet the criteria and what sort of assistance will/ are you giving (If any)?

Are the pre-conditions reasonable and easily attainable by those who cannot return?

Do they have to do this on their own or do you still have responsibility for such ones?

What happens to those who can genuinely not return or be resettled, but do not have the means to reintegrate in Ghana?

How are you working with the Ghana government to ensure that they fulfill their obligations towards the refugees with respect to ensuring "smooth integration"?

Resettlement

Is resettlement still available/ ongoing?

If yes, who qualifies?

Is there any possibility of mass resettlement as a way of dealing with the residual caseload after a sizeable number have left for Liberia?

Why are new activities (like re-application for failed resettlement applicants, list of names for resettlement beneficiaries) being introduced on a camp where return is being advocated?

Are you aware of refugees' views about the solutions available? What are these?

How are you dealing with such perceptions to eliminate animosity and possible eruption in the case of frustration with and/or rejection of the preferred/implemented solution?

ID card (and resettlement hope)

What was the purpose of the ID card programme?

Could you describe/explain the process to me?

How many people were registered?

When was this?

Were problems/challenges encountered? If yes, what were these?

Were the numbers a true reflection of the estimated/real refugee population here?

Were there inflations?, deflations? And what accounted for this?

What was the purpose of collecting individual stories during the process?

How have these been dealt with and with what outcomes?

What advantages and/or disadvantages does the ID card confer on refugees?

Was it ever the basis for resettling some people?

If yes, what criteria were used to determine who among ID card holders qualified or not for resettlement?

What are the implications/consequences of not having an ID card?

Current Activities on the camp

What are your current activities on the camp? / What programmes do you have in place currently?

Are all your implementing partners still in place and active? In which areas?

What implications will your withdrawal, if planned, have on these activities and life on the camp in general?

Has June 30th meant anything for/affected these programmes? In what ways?

Are there plans of closing down the camp any time now or in the near future?

If yes, what will happen to the rest of the refugees?

Are there any plans of revoking Liberian refugee status? On what basis will this be done? (Cessation clause as yet applicable or relevant in the case of Liberian refugees?)

> If yes, what will inform such a decision?

> If no, what is the way forward?

Follow-up Questions as necessary

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Appendix III c: Interview Guide for GRB

How many refugees are recognised officially and by what criteria?

What is the profile of the refugees?

What are your activities on the camp (if any)?

What are your responsibilities towards Liberian refugees?

What is your policy stance with respect to 'durable solutions'?

What is your preferred 'durable solution'? Why?

Is Re-integration an option?

How does one qualify? / What are the requirements? What happens in case a person is not able to meet these?

Any programs in place to ensure smooth transition in case of re-integration of some refugees?

What do you expect of the refugees now?

Would any be required to live here as any foreigner? At what point will this be the case?

What is the situation in Liberia now?

Is individual status determination ongoing?

> If yes, will it stop? and when?

> If no, why not?

What opportunities / problems or challenges have you had with respect to Liberian refugees in Ghana?

What do you consider to be the way forward?

Is the camp going to be dissolved? If yes, when?

What happens to the infrastructure on it?

What will be the implications for those who want to remain there?

What will be the sanctions for refusing to comply?

What happens to the 'residual caseload'?

Should UNHCR withdraw from the camp, what next for you?

Are you aware of refugees' views towards 'solutions' being placed before them?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Does this make a difference? How so?

To what extent are their views taken into consideration when decisions regarding them are made? How is it done?

Follow-up questions as necessary.

Appendix III d: Follow-up Questions for UNHCR and Ghana Refugee Board

In the period when I was leaving, assisted repatriation had ended and December was when all was being closed except substantial numbers came forward to be repatriated, has there been any changes to the programme?

    If yes, what occasioned these changes? How?

You indicated previously that an information campaign was planned early this year to explain the consequences of their non return, did it come on?

      If yes , when and what information was given?

      If no, why not?

Do Liberian refugees in Ghana have any right to express themselves by demonstrating?

If yes, did they exercise or abuse this right in their demonstration?

Do Liberians refugees in Ghana have a legitimate claim in not availing themselves of VR?

Can and will their demands be addressed in any way?

Have they seriously infringed upon the purposes and principles of the refugee Convention and other instruments?

Of the registered population of over 26,000 or so, a relatively few demonstrated, what measures (if any) are in place to ensure that the rest don't suffer for the wrong actions of a few?

Can the cessation clause be invoked in the case of Liberian refugees in Ghana?

When and under what circumstances can the cessation clause be invoked?

What provisions (land restitution, economic and social stability) are in place in Liberia currently?

What implications will the return (if it happens) of all these people have on livelihood/integration prospects and on the structures in Liberia?

Will you (How) determine the status of those who have a genuine fear of persecution?

      What next for such ones?

      What about the rest?

What happens to those who are not registered? (Non-ID-card holders)?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Will they be offered any package or incentive to return?

Is the camp going to be closed down?

     If yes, approximately when is this planned for?

<u>Situation in Liberia</u>

What destinations are they being sent to?

Do they have settlements or how are they supposed to integrate upon return?

What are the Liberian authorities doing upon their return?

What is there to return to and what structures of support are in place (if any)?

Appendix III e: Follow-Up Questions during subsequent fieldwork in Ghana (UNHCR)

<u>UNHCR</u>

What is the status of Liberian refugees in Ghana?, and how long does this entitle them to stay in Ghana, especially after successful conduct of elections in their country?

Do Liberian refugees need international protection?

Under which circumstances will you consider that Liberian refugees' need for international protection has come to an end? (Cessation Clauses applicable?)

What conditions have you required of the Ghana government with respect to Liberian refugees?

 What do you ask of them now? Are these met satisfactorily?

What do you require of them after VR? How do you ensure implementation?

Though not having an individual claim to convention status, what do refugees have to give up (if anything) in return for group protection?

Can refugees own land in Ghana? Are there any protection laws to ensure this?

Given the principle of *non-refoulement*, can host states require refugees to return?

Can UNHCR require refugees to return to Liberia?

 Do the refugees have recourse to other options?

 If they refuse, what further measures can be taken?

What role (if any) should International assistance play in Liberia now and how does this or should it affect return/reintegration?

What measures have been taken to involve refugees in the decisions about their return?

What about fact-finding missions, what have been the recommendations of such missions?

 How have they been constituted? On what basis? Age, gender,

 representativeness of the refugee population?

To what extent have the recommendations from fact-finding missions been incorporated into the actual decision to VR?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

<u>Upon return</u>

What ground preparations have been put in place in Liberia to ensure return with safety and in dignity?

What is the shelter situation? Education (schools), health facilities, civil machinery functioning?

Is this information available for all the counties?

Appendix IV a: Interview guide (Life history Interviews for Tamil IDPs in Vavuniya)

Background

Name (anonymised)

Family (Children? Siblings? Parents? Grandparents?)

Age

Place of current residence

Place of origin / Where born

      Language/Ethnicity (optional)

Marital Status (If married, when & where is spouse from)

Educational history/background

      Situation whilst on the move? Challenges?

Skills/ employment situation (before, now)?

    What sort of skills training is provided (if any)?

    Is it of use in here?

    Will it be of use back in your place of origin?

    Income? Expenditure (optional)

    Are you able to put aside any savings in this situation? In what way? (optional)

Flight history

When did you leave your place of origin

      Why? (memories, flight stories)

      Age at time of leaving?

How was information to move relayed to you?

How did you move? Who did you go together with?

How was the journey? What were the conditions like for you & family?

Place (s) you went to? For how long?

Family & support systems

Family (education, work & livelihood) of parents, siblings, grandparents (if any).

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Family members at present - who, how related?

Where do children, parents, sisters, brothers, grandparents, live now?

Structures of support? (Social, religious, financial, cultural, other?)

Life/Conditions in welfare centres and/or relocation villages

Why did you come to Vavuniya?

Which places in Vavuniya did you come to?

Where did you come to (a camp or welfare centre and /or relocation village?)

Why? How?

Initially?

Approx. how many families were there with you (if you know?)

What were (are) the living conditions like there?

Routines, concerns, assistance, organisation

How is a typical day like for you here? /What do you do every day?

How was it like when you arrived?

What were (are) your general concerns? and security (tangible & intangible) ones?

Threats from any persons? groups? (optional)

What provisions, assistance structures (if any) were (are) in place?

By whom? For how long? and afterwards?

Do you know how the camp/ relocation village is organised / administered?

Any other organisations present? What do they do for you (if anything)?

Which organisation (s) do you consider to be in charge here?

Which organisation (s) is offering assistance here?

Do you know of any organisations formed by the IDPs themselves?

Do you know the ways in which they are working or helping out?

Do you know of any international organisations (UNHCR, etc) here?

What do you think about their activities here?

How is it with movement in and out of the camp/ relocation village?

Is it safe? Is it restricted?

      If yes? How so, why?

Where do you consider to be home? Why?

Situation in place of origin

What do you know about the situation back there?

Is it possible (or not) to go there? Why?

In your view, how much longer would it take to go back?

Is it safe?

Hopes & future aspirations

What are your hopes / fears (if any) about the current situation?

Do you have any short term plans?

Do you have any long-term plans/ for the next 5-10 years? What are these?

Where do you see yourself in the next few years?

What resources by way of assistance could help you reach these?

What goals have you set for yourself (if any) and what steps are you taking towards reaching them?

Do you think about the future? And what do you see?

Other thoughts/issues?

Arising auxiliary questions asked as and when necessary

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Appendix IV b: NRC / UNHCR Sri-Lanka Interview protocol

What is your mandate in Sri Lanka?

Do you oversee other countries in the sub-region?

Background/History here?

What are your activities here in Vavuniya?

How many welfare centres/relocation villages are here in Vavuniya (if any)?

Approximately how many are in these places respectively? / Profile

What sort of recognition (if any) is accorded the conflict-displaced Tamil IDPs here?

If any, what percentages are recognised as such? What criteria are employed in determining this?

What programmes do you have in place in the Welfare centres/relocation villages?

Any specific programmes with respect to education, job/skills training?

Are the IDPs able to practise any of these skills (if any) as a means of earning a decent living?

Do you have any collaborating agencies/partners (who are they, in what capacity do they act & why these specific ones)?

Which government agencies do you work with (if any) and in what areas?

Who have you been assisting and how do these qualify for assistance?

In what form(s)?

Which groups form the bulk of these (beneficiaries)?

Are there any special programmes in place for these?

What is your assessment of the security situation at the welfare centres/relocation villages?

What are the main causes of insecurity? (tangible & intangible)

Who do you consider vulnerable among the conflict-displaced and why?

Who are the most vulnerable in the welfare centres/relocation villages?

How is security situation like for different segments of the IDP population (e.g. men, women, youth, children) in the welfare centres/relocation villages?

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

What security programmes /measures (if any) are in place to protect the conflict-displaced IDPs? Who ensures this?

Is (Sexual) Gender-based violence a significant problem here? And teenage pregnancy?

What about rapes?

What facilities (if any) do you have in place to deal with such problems?

What recourse do victims have (are they usually free to report incidents and be protected)?

Are perpetrators brought to book? and in what ways?

What measures in your view could be adopted to improve the security situation there?

What current policies (if any) are you implementing with respect the proposed solutions?

How successful have they been?

What factors do you take into consideration with respect to "return" of the conflict-displaced IDPs?

What in your view would enable them to return and stay?

Is it possible &/or viable now?

Is the right to return an issue in this context? How are they accorded such rights? By whom?

How is the current situation here like?

Which of these solutions do you think is realistic in view of the present circumstances/situation?

Could resettlement to a third country ever be an option in this place/situation?

If no, why not?

If yes who qualify and to what destinations?

What in your opinion are the prospects for these conflict-displaced IDPs in view of the ongoing war?

Other issues raised as relevant.

Appendix V: Map of Liberia showing counties and insert map of West Africa showing

Ghana, Liberia and its surrounding countries
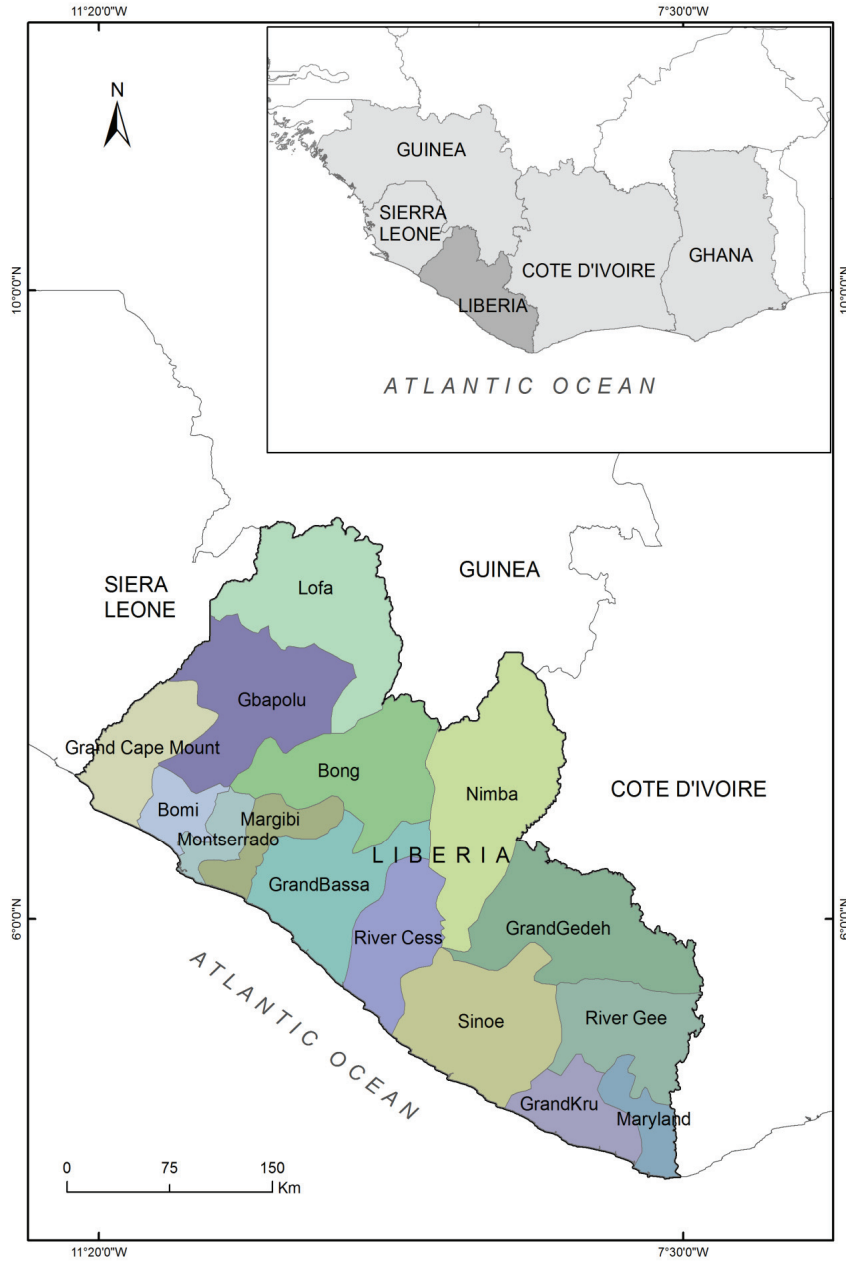
Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

Appendix VI: Unedited Transcript of Sections of FGD with Youths.

NB: Appended here are opinions expressed by some youths during a focus group discussion as to their views about the three 'durable' solutions, particularly why some refugees might choose to repatriate, locally integrate or opt for resettlement and the solutions that could be viable. They also reflected on what they have heard about or perceive the situation to be like in Liberia and the attitude of Ghanaians towards the refugees. The acuteness of their observations and contradictions inherent in their views are noteworthy, coming, as it were, from a very important segment of the refugee population, youths. Though all the views expressed were indeed valuable, in the subsequent information presented, only excerpts bearing on the issue of solutions have been provided.

For there to be solutions to the refugee problem, we think:
- There must be peace in the country, development. Some on the camp don't have support, no homes to return to, they need money, jobs to build up their homes. Before going home, you need money so the resettlement was good to help people rebuild their lives to enable them go back to help Liberia.
- We think Liberia is safe and our president has said that we should come there to build up the country. So they want to help people to go back because they may not have the money to do so [return] on their own. But going back is not the issue as people need things to settle. Some people, when they go, have nobody. I will say it is bad to return because some of us are now going to have our national exams so if we go there things will be strange for us.

The VR is not bad because it is not force for us to go back. We think it is voluntary because they don't force you to go. They ask you why you want to go, if you don't have any place to stay, they will help.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

<u>Why VR?</u>

- Some are going because there have no option of travelling [on resettlement]
- If they stay here, they are not doing anything here so they think it's better to go and find a level there.
- Some got afraid that the programme [VR and resettlement] was closing so they left.
- Some are educated so they wanted to go and work.
- Some had friends encouraging them to return.
- Some go out of frustration as they have been denied of travelling [on resettlement]
- Some feel that have no option if the camp is closed
- Some go back as they left their country for long and want to see the place.
- Some feel they will get better jobs to do when they go there.
- Some have their families there, some also have their families abroad who are telling them that when they go back to Liberia it will be easier for them to travel.
- Some go back to reclaim their property because if they are here, somebody will reclaim their property.
- Some went as they want to go develop their country.

<u>Situation in Liberia now</u>.

- Some say the president is building the country, she is trying to develop - electrifying, building roads, etc.
- Some NGOs [are] helping the government to develop the country.
- I say Liberia is a bit ok but for those who can find jobs and are educated. But it is bad for those who do not have any education. I know a lady who went back and don't have anything to do.
- There is some construction going on.
- Some think Liberia is fine because they say they are developing the country now (repeated)

- I think the government is meeting the needs of people. They say they are giving free education to people.
- I think in the country it is safe but in the counties it's not – some are still having guns in the counties.
- I think Liberia is not ok because I have a friend who calls who says they found no proper food so they are struggling to make ends meet.
- The main problem is in the interior, many people are finding it difficult to go to school and the government is finding it difficult to care for their needs.
- From the city to interior part, you have to walk. But there are schools in the interior though they are not good and sometimes there is a lack of teachers. They have free schools in the interior that people are attending.
- Only lazy people find hard time in Liberia now.
- In my grandmother's village, they put together teachers to send them to areas to teach.
- If I was living by myself, I would like to go but for my mother, she refuses to go... I'm missing my father, sisters, grandmother.
- I'd like to go back but my mother's in London so I'll join her but I'd love to go to Liberia
- I don't want to go back now because I want to go abroad to study hard to come back and build the country.
- I don't want to go now because the government exam is approaching and if you go, you won't get a school to go and take the BECE exams. Here we are learning mostly the Ghanaian system so going back to Liberia this year is not possible.
- Some do not want to go back as they are enjoying the life here on the camp.
- In Liberia right now, they say most people living here (in the camp) have useless lives so they are not wanted in Liberia.
- Some also say that they will be resettled so still holding on.
- Some really want to travel abroad because they feel they have been exposed to the world and if some have been resettled, so all should be.
- Some claim there is no proper education but I don't think so.

Protracted Displacement, Static Spaceplaces and Solutions to Displacement

- Some are also ex-combatants who are afraid to return because they killed people.
- Some say those in government were involved in the war so they are afraid to go back.
- Some were threatened during the war so they are afraid to go.
- I think we can have recourse to courts to address fears.
- Some are rightly afraid because they are getting information from relatives that it's not safe.

Resettlement
- It is still going on in certain places
- Some people's names come up and they don't get to go because their spaces were sold by those who are in charge.
- Qualification is through P1-family filling in for you.
- UN brought forms on the camp for peoples' stories and they were resettled [Hint to so-called ID card or 'by the grace of God' resettlement]

LI?
- People should find means of supporting themselves
- They should go to internet café to get sponsors
- If I have family abroad and they are sending me money, then I'd better use it by finding a business here to do.
- If you are not a citizen here, it is hard to get a job so how can one cope?
- It depends on your education or background.
- We'd prefer to be here as refugees because I can't go back home.
- You may have somebody to sponsor you to be a foreigner [in Ghana]
- Being a foreigner you have more respect and you have more rights than a refugee
- People won't take advantage of you.
- Some people are insulting our rights as refugees.
- You will get a better job as a foreigner.

<u>Living with Ghanaians / Ghanaian attitudes:</u>

- Sometimes it is difficult living with Ghanaians. My aunt is married to a Ghanaian.
- Most I have encountered are not bad but some don't like Liberians at all.
- On TV3 [local Ghanaian television station] they were voting whether Liberians should go home or not and about 70% said yes!