

“Plastic Migrants” and Deprived Livelihoods: Re-settlement and Forced Migration

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SUMMARY

“Voluntary” out-migration is anything but voluntary or driven by “free” volition. Forced migration and displacement in turn draw the gaze to the complexities and fraught realities imbricated in certain compelled contexts of “displacements” and movements of people and their livelihoods. The paper works through the prismatic lens of sense-making theory in attempting to reveal how a group of internally displaced people in Zimbabwe endeavour to reconstruct their displaced lives. Seen through a sense-making lens, each displaced individual is understood as moving through space and time and interacting with other (displaced) individuals and certain scavenged material and emotional artefacts or relics which to rebuild and assemble a material (and emotional) shelter or dwelling place, while simultaneously attempting to assemble order in a world of political complexity, immense uncertainty and continuous change. Adopting a micro-analytical perspective and focusing on “space” (as opposed to “place” or home) allows one to see space as a socially and discursively constructed aspect of the displaced person’s experiences. Working through the narratives of a sample community of twelve participants living at Caledonia settlement in Zimbabwe, the paper problematizes and “troubles” the notion of subaltern agency within the context of displacement. The qualitative data elicited, in turn reveals the layers and multiple tiers of both visible deprivation as well as (in) visible agency embedded in the actions of the displaced people.

KEY WORDS: displacement, refugee, migration, sense-making, space

INTRODUCTION

It was the noted and recently late British sociologist John Urry, who wrote in his book, *Mobilities* (2007) that the contemporary condition is one of heightened movement and mobility across borders made increasingly porous. This paraphrasing of Urry, of course, oversimplifies the dense complexities of transnational and internal movement and mobilities. It also appears overly seductive as it (seemingly) draws attention to voluntary movement and heightened connectivities in the light of the various pot holed processes of globalisation. However, in the context of particular enactments

of (forced) movement, migration and mobility, there are disrupted lives and livelihoods that are enmeshed with immense heartache, pain and protracted vulnerability.

Globally, at the end of 2005, about 23.7 million internally displaced persons¹ (IDPs) were seeking refuge within their own conflict-affected countries. Displacements on this kind of mammoth scale across the globe are more often than not induced by armed conflicts and grave human rights violations, but beyond this, the role of other political, economic, or social determinants of internal displacement exists also (see Czaika and Kis-Katos, 2009: 399). Rwamatwara's (2005) paper brings the global crisis closer to home in his discussion of the negative effects of forced migrations and displacement on both democratisation and sustainable development in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa and points out that the actual form, the "causes and the consequences of forced displacements in Africa are differently experienced in space and time across the continent" (2005: 173).

The article by Stola (1992) highlighted over two decades ago the sheer size and magnitude of the phenomenon of forced migration in the context of Africa, and traced its historical evolution, "intensity and atrocity in time and space" across Africa. However, more recently Moore and Shellman point out that the literature on forced migration is dominated by the "idiographic", meaning that it appears to primarily comprise "descriptive case studies, advocacy and awareness pieces, and policy evaluations" (see Moore and Shellman, 2004: 723). They also point out that the literature is also mainly "systemic" and "structural in its theoretical" stance, protesting that the same is not true for the extant work on voluntary migration. Perhaps the most piercing objection, and one that I wholly accede to, is their claim that "the theoretical literature on forced migration tends to take the country or society as the unit of explanation and seeks to identify macro-level concepts" (2004: 724–725), where empirical analyses of data are not overly "thick" or strong. My point of insertion is, in turn, an attempt to offer a critical counterbalance, by offering "thick" empirical and material contexts of lived experience. This paper in turn takes the "individual" and the individuals' experiences as the unit of analysis, and turns the gaze to internal displacement and a group of internally displaced people (IDP) in Zimbabwe.²

¹ Forced migrants comprise two groups: refugees who have left their country of nationality, due to fear of persecution or violence, and the internally displaced who are similarly affected and forced to relocate, but remain in the country.

² Moore and Shellman (2004: 725) also assert that many of the studies "suffer from selection bias" by focusing only on countries that produce refugees.

The significantly large population of migrants living in Caledonia settlement in Zimbabwe is one example of an internally displaced (and misplaced) populace, that a decade after forced relocation still squats at the borderlands of withered hope, aspiration and lives interrupted and disrupted, while still trying to assemble normality. In her evocatively written paper entitled "Reflections on Displacement in Zimbabwe", Amanda Hammar opens with a rather emotional statement, no less true because of its emotive quality, that "[d]isplacements of various kinds, overlaying one another across time and space, litter Zimbabwe's histories and geographies" (2008: 28). I would add that these displacements overlay and drape space, time and the intergenerational lives that inhabit these spaces and times.

Displacement in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the early arrival of Europeans in the country in the late 19th century (1880s) which marked the beginning of the colonial era. The British settlers under the leadership of the British South Africa Company (BSAP) embarked on land annexation with the white settler population "taking" 80% of the fertile land. However, Hager (2006) adds that contemporary Zimbabwe has experienced new insidious forms of internal displacement, multiplying exponentially the number of displaced lives. Hammar (2008) affirms that the post 2000 era saw Zimbabwe experiencing a number of relentless and successive waves of displacement resulting in the dislocation of thousands of people: their livelihoods, their homes and their loved ones.

Internal displacement as a phenomenon is also more often than not, not mono-causal (see Betts 2010: 61). Likewise, Zimbabwe bears the onerous brunt of multiple causative factors for its internally displaced people or IDPs. The country has experienced development-induced displacement such as that precipitated by the construction of Tokwe-Mukosi Dam in Masvingo Province (Chikumbu, 2014), which began in 2008. Natural disasters have also played their part in increasing the numbers of IDPs in Zimbabwe. The most recent were the 2014 floods that left hundreds of families homeless who had to be settled at Chingwizi transit camp (Chikumbu, 2014). However, more invidious by orchestration and sheer magnitude and consequences thereof, are the complex and entangled political machinations and strife that is an additional contributory factor to internal displacement in Zimbabwe. Arguably, one of the most significant events that resulted in hundreds of thousands of people being supplanted or "unplaced" is the 2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). According to Hammar (2008), this accounted for millions emigrating and about 100 000 being displaced. Nipping at the heels of the FTLRP was Operation Murambatsvina

(colloquially referred to as “Clean the Filth”) in May 2005. The UN Special Envoy to Zimbabwe (see Musoni, 2010) put the total number of people affected by this government programme deprived of livelihoods and left homeless, at approximately 700 000³. Bratton and Masunungure (2006) also confirm these statistics and add that 570 000 of these were IDPs (see also Naidu and Benhura, 2015). Also of note, were the March 2008 and the subsequent presidential run-off elections. While there were no precise figures, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) June 2008 report asserts that thousands of people were displaced by post-election violence during this period.

The context of displacement in Zimbabwe is thus densely fraught and complex. That said, the displacement in the context of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, during which thousands were displaced into Caledonia, holds our attention for the sheer volume of people displaced and the manner in which the relocation was orchestrated and experienced by the people. It is this displaced community that forms the focus here. The paper in turn takes a micro-analytical perspective by working with a small sample community and focuses on “space” as a socially and discursively constructed aspect of the displaced person’s experiences. The paper proceeds through the narratives of the participants and “troubles” the notion of subaltern agency within the context of displacement, space and place.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected over June – August 2015 by a research assistant who was a Zimbabwean citizen, but studying in South Africa. The research assistant was conversant with the local Shona language and paid several initial visits to Caledonia settlement, gaining familiarity with both the space and the many people inhabiting or attempting to make a home of the space.

The research site of Caledonia was, among other reasons, selected for its accessibility. Given the fraught nature of research with forced migrants, potentially volatile political environments and justifiable suspicions and concerns for participants and for interviewer, safety and accessibility become necessary imperatives to be woven into the methodological design

³ It bears noting that an estimated 700 000 were said to have directly lost dwellings and/or informal work places. However, a far higher figure was provided by the UN Habitat Report of Anna Tibaijuka in 2005. By applying a “multiplier effect” the number of those indirectly affected by Operation Murambatsvina – around 2.4 million, was also included and noted as needing to be acknowledged (see: http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/zimbabwe/zimbabwe_rpt.pdf).

of a study. Caledonia is in the immediate vicinity of Harare, and although there is no formal public transport servicing the area, it is relatively accessible on foot after the last "drop off" point in the neighbouring residential area. The number of people in the area is estimated at being approximately 30 202 according to the 2012 Census. Thus, selecting Caledonia, methodologically speaking, also ensured that the probability of securing a sample of diverse individuals with a diversity of historical and autobiographical backgrounds, was enhanced. The settlement has been in existence for about a decade with much of the population comprising long term occupants; people who have been there close to a decade and whose storied accounts of themselves and their move to the space of Caledonia had itself a long history. "Evictees" and displaced individuals and families from Operation Murambatsvina were ferried to this settlement and most have remained there years later. As Chitekwe-Biti (2009) attests, some have experienced forced migration more than twice in the last fifteen years.

That said, the people of Caledonia, as potential participants, had been understandably initially highly suspicious and resistant to the interviewer, until they gained a certain level of familiarity of and acquaintance with the research assistant/interviewer. Identifying and working through the *entrée* of a key informant, who was a local Zimbabwean, also helped. She was a doctoral candidate working in the area of displacees and access to secondary schooling. Having been born and having lived in Zimbabwe all her life, she was familiar with the Caledonia settlement. While still an outsider and not personally known to the Caledonia inhabitants, she was an "insider" in the sense that she was herself Zimbabwean, and spoke the local language and was not perceived as "foreign" by the participants. Thereafter several fluidly structured interviews, "conversations as interviews" in the local Shona language, together with sustained participant observations, allowed for the beginnings of ethnographic glimpses into the materiality of the participants' lives.

While initially opposed to answering any questions about themselves, the participants later relaxed enough to allow a glimpse through the windows that their narratives offered. Twelve participants were interviewed in total. The richly textured and patterned "storied" experiences, shared in the local language, were noted down manually⁴ and were later translated and transcribed.

⁴ Manual note-taking was seen as preferable to audio recording as a recorder is often seen as intrusive, and given the sensitive nature of the questions, might have made the participants uncomfortable and even suspicious.

Several readings and re-readings of the transcripts allowed a sense of familiarity of the participants. These transcriptions, together with multiple narratives/interviews and conversations with the research assistant and her perceptions of the research process, provided me with a rich data set and allowed an assembling of the data, and thereafter allowed an analysis of the data within the context of the main sense-making theoretical framework adopted.

It goes without saying that there are incumbent limitations when data is not collected by oneself. However, the political reality is that I, as Indian woman and academic, would not have been granted any kind of access into the lives of the displacees in Caledonia. While language would not have necessarily been a barrier in itself, as many Caledonians are comfortable in English, my presence as a foreigner (not from any Humanitarian Organisation coming with the offer of aid), would understandably have been seen with a lens of suspicion. That said, the process of choosing and training a research assistant and engaging in multiple deliberative and reiterative processes of interviewing the research assistant herself offers some element of triangulation in the analysis. I was also able to draw on data that I had collected in the context of Gujarati migrants in South Africa (see Naidu, 2008, 2014). These individuals had, of course, completely different circumstances that shaped their dislocation from their homes, and were transnationals rather than internally displaced. However, as these were studies where I had collected the data myself, I was able to reflect on the complexities when data collection was once removed, so to speak, and what impact this might have on analysis and write up.

There are necessarily limitations to data not collected by oneself. However, it is felt that training in anthropological methodology, one submits, is able to assist with being able to apply a thick qualitative analysis in the manner in which so called second hand data is approached. Part of this approach and management includes levels of reading and re-reading of data as well as multiple deliberative and re-iterative interviews of the person collecting the data in order to cohere the narratives in and in the context of the profiles of the participants assembled.

Narrative itself can function as a sense-making tool as it serves to both simultaneously engage the participant (who is also the narrator) *and* the narrative, and emerges as a performance that is capable of merging social and individual landscapes.

Working through the theoretical elements embedded within sense-making theory the paper thus attempts to reveal that the forced migrants be-

come displaced "subalterns", to borrow a famously deployed term of Gayatri Spivak (1988), and further attempts to illustrate that there are levels and performances of subaltern agency that are brought into enactment in a bid to survive through the process and reality of being uprooted and un-placed. Sense-making is seen as the sense that people make out of their (at times) dis-ordered and chaotic lives. As a theory, sense-making offers a lens to see how the individuals attempt to assemble order out of disorder and incongruence and meaning out of ostensible hopelessness.

Sense-making, the term coined by Karl Weick (1995), refers to how we structure the unknown environment we inhabit so as to be able to act in it. For Weick the term, in its most basic form, referred to "the making of sense" (1995: 4). As Ancona puts it, "sense-making involves coming up with a plausible understanding, a map-of a shifting world" (see Ancona, 2012: 3). Sense-making refers to the levels of activity that allow one to bend and curve the ongoing complexity of the world into a "situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action" (Ancona, 2012: 4).

I utilise sense-making not only as an "outside looking-in" theoretical lens, where, as researcher, I apply the tenets of the theory to understand the actions of the participants. I also deploy and operationalise sense-making from the "inside looking-in" so to speak. By this I mean I use sense-making as a framework that the participants themselves adopt, on an experiential level (rather than a conscious cognitive level) and in the situated context of responding to their displacement. I argue that both the physical as well as the discursive actions of the displaced migrants (participants in this study), their enactments in the context of living in Caledonia, unveil how they assemble sense out of the chaos and disorder set in motion by being forcibly relocated through exercising some level of agency. Thus sense-making is operationalised twice-over in order to aid in a micro-analysis⁵ of the discursive constructions of space and place, in the participants' assembling and ascribing order to that space through their particular agentic acts in Caledonia. While space arguably can be constructed within the architecture of spatial and temporal dimensions, one contends that "place" holds the added dimension of emotion. Sense-making theory also allows us, one maintains, to glimpse what may be construed as enactments of subaltern agency on the part of the displacees.

⁵ While narratives of all in the sample community of twelve participants in Caledonia are critically engaged with, given space constraints, only a few are held up as substantive examples to the analyses and conclusions drawn.

DISPLACED TO CALEDONIA

Caledonia became home to the “recipients” of the Zimbabwean government programme called Operation Murambatsvina (IDMC, 2008). Operation Murambatsvina led to many residential houses and buildings being razed down as they had become (re)categorised as illegal structures (see Bratton and Masunungure, 2006). Caledonia in turn became a detention camp of sorts for people whose homes had been destroyed through the programme. As mentioned earlier, the claim was that approximately 570 000 were displaced and were forced to move to places like Caledonia.

Caledonia is situated 30 kilometres east of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. It sits rather uncomfortably (and perhaps suggestive of the *dis*-ease and *dis*-comfort of the inhabitants themselves) on the periphery of Harare, sandwiched between Tafara, one of the oldest low income and high density residential areas, and Zimre Park, a fairly new middle income residential area. According to the Zimstat 2012 Census, Caledonia is home to 7 955 households and is “home” to approximately 30 202 people.

This brings into stark relief the density of people living “crammed” into an area made up primarily of crudely constructed dwellings of “tarp”, plastic, paper and other make-shift building material. Like many or most informal settlements in Zimbabwe, the area is starkly barren and devoid of any primary infrastructure such as roads, sewer, running water or electricity. There are also no schools or clinics, although there are periods when mobile clinics have serviced the area. A nearby (under resourced) clinic in the city is where most of the sick are taken to.

As the heartache, frustration and anger embedded in the narratives reveal, Caledonia was originally communicated to the people being forcibly moved there as being a temporary holding camp where people were to await (permanent) resettlement elsewhere. As the narratives show, the people scrambled to erect what they thought would be short term temporary shelters and hurriedly constructed cheap dwellings overlooking basic normative building safety standards (Chitekwe-Biti, 2009: 348). The result stands visually today as haphazardly built “homes” that lie cheek to jowl next to each other. Potts tells us that Caledonia “quickly achieved an infamous reputation as a place of extreme deprivation and terrible environmental conditions” (see Potts, 2008: 4).

Within these haphazard dwellings made of fragile and scavenged materials, live thousands of the internally displaced people (IDPs). The IDPs in Caledonia are a unique category of forced migrants. As the participants

themselves appear to be aware; they do not easily fall into the different classificatory list set in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement or GDIP.⁶ These guiding principles were developed under the aegis of Francis Deng, the then Representative of the Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). The guiding principles were developed over several years, for the protection of those who fell outside the bounded classification of "refugee". For the internally displaced are not victims of "ethnic cleansing", armed conflict, development projects or other contexts cited in Principle 6(2) (see Kälin, 2008). Put baldly – they are not refugees. For the term "refugee" is legally as well as socially constituted and constructed, and not only carries empirical sociological and socio-political connotations, but above all, is a normative and legal category, enshrined as such in international law (Rwamatwara, 2005: 175). This legal category is denied to the forced migrant who is displaced and relocated to Caledonia.

Equally revealing is that the settlement space was initially visually peppered with the trademark spotted blue United Nations (UN) tents, a visual testimony of the UN's (initial) acknowledgement of the vulnerable status and predicament of the displaced people here. However, that presence is no longer. Conversations with the research assistant reveals, however, that a few tattered UN tents still stand forlorn amidst a haphazard and diverse array of other makeshift housing units. Again a testimony to the fact that the people here are not refugees in the legal sense of the term, nor are the displacees, "migrants" in the sense of (conventional) mobile subjects.

I have used the term "plastic migrants" in my title not as other writers such as Grosz (1994) in the sense of being "malleable". They are not to be seen as "plastic" in the manner that bodies may be plastic, pliable and able to be reshaped and acted upon. I use plastic in the sense of synthetic, not real in the same way materials such as wood or metal may be. I have appropriated the sense of "plastic" from the local vendors in Zanzibar who work as tourist touts. I had opportunity to spend time with many of them while undertaking research on tourism mobilities. During this time I learned that the Zanzibar touts routinely refer to the Masai working alongside them as "Plastic Masai", meaning that they were not *real* Masai. This was in reference to the fact that these Masai men had left both their mainland Tanzania, as well as their traditional livelihoods instead of hawking tourist trinkets on the beaches of Zanzibar. The local Zanzibari felt that these Masai men

⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>, accessed online 20 January 2016.

continued to wear full traditional attire merely to appease/please the tourists and increase trade, and were thus not of *real* Masai stock or material. The merits of this judgment and labelling remains questionable, of course, as the local Zanzibar men also resented the Masai eroding into their own business with the tourists. I have, however, borrowed and adapted the label “plastic” as a term that is wonderfully evocative of *not the real thing*; meaning that the displaced individual is not a migrant in the real sense, given the forced compulsion of movement.

NARRATIVES OF DISPLACEMENT: FORCED MIGRATION IN EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

Perhaps it is my background as anthropologist, but I have always found the empirical as compelling micro-insights in larger social realities. The empirical grounds the abstract in the context of real lives and real people.

While large statistical figures and numerical indices provide a critical overall picture of the scale of displacement, it is within the fabric and texture of the empirical lives of the people effected, that one is able to gain valuable insights into the realities negotiated. It is to these narratives that we turn to now. Many of the narratives reference Operation Murambatsvina. As documented by the official United Nations Special Report⁷ in May 2005, the Zimbabwean government launched a clean-up campaign of its cities called “Murambatsvina”. The special report states that it was “described as a programme to enforce bylaws to stop all forms of alleged ‘illegal activities in areas such as vending, illegal structures and illegal cultivation’ among others in its cities.”⁸

Beginning in the capital Harare, the clean-up escalated into a country wide “demolish and evict” operation carried out by the police and the army. The report notes that:

Operation Restore Order took place at a time of persistent budget deficits, triple-digit inflation, critical food and fuel shortages and chronic shortages of foreign currency. It was implemented in a highly polarized political climate characterized by mistrust, fear and a lack of dialogue between Government and local authorities, and between the former and civil society.

⁷ Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, (http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/zimbabwe/zimbabwe_rpt.pdf).

⁸ http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/zimbabwe/zimbabwe_rpt.pdf (page 2), accessed online 10 September 2015.

The underlying ideological rationale was to also purposively undermine potential political affiliations to the state opposition party. The narratives that follow, however, reveal realities that speak to lives and people being displaced from livelihoods and homes.

Early memories of being displaced

Memories are actions, thoughts and emotions embodied within the lives of individuals. Often the memories that are seared into us and able to be called up with ease are the memories that have been associated with immense joy, and conversely, intense pain. Memories of displacement, being as they are the time of dislocation and dispossession are often the memories that remain painful.

Alex is a 20-year-old male who came with his family to live in Caledonia. Alex shares:

We came here after we were forcibly ejected out of Porta Farm. Although I was young, I remember how we were called to a meeting where we were told that we have to leave Porta for Caledonia. I think this was just a ploy to separate people in the settlement. People were put into categories destined for three different areas. Some were going to Hopley, some to Caledonia and some to the rural areas. The idea was that people affiliated to the same party should go to different areas and this would arrest the growth of such groups.

Immediately after the announcement, the government lorries came to ferry us to the designated areas. Some people refused to move. The result was that this attitude cost them the transportation to the new places. My family was taken by the trucks to Caledonia while the "stubborn" ones had to find alternative means of transport from Porta Farm.

Evans is a 65-year-old male who narrated that his journey to Caledonia actually started in 1992:

I had relocated to Mutawatawa in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe due to my trade. My friend talked to the local headman and convinced him that I was a good person [supporter of ruling party] and I was allocated a small plot where I built houses for my family. I stayed there for fifteen years. Trouble came during the parliamentary elections in 2002 when I was accused of supporting MDC [Movement for Democratic Change, an opposition party]. I was called to a Zanu PF party meeting where I was told that people like me deserved to be punished thoroughly. There was a heap of sticks cut for the purpose of disciplining me and five others. After the beating, I decided to leave that same night, leaving behind everything I owned. I had been breeding pigs, some goats and

cattle; all this I had to leave behind. I passed by the headmaster's house and asked for transfer letters for my children. I discovered the headmaster was in a similar predicament as he had been given forty-five minutes to vacate the area. I came to Harare where my in-laws gave me backyard rooms to rent. This was a short-lived stay because in 2005, I was forced to move again by the "tsunami" [Operation Murambatsvina]. The backyard rooms I had been renting were condemned as illegal structures and were destroyed. I found myself in this place [referring to Caledonia].

The two stories above of crude and violent displacement *into* Caledonia are echoed with almost astonishing and alarming breadth of similarity amongst all the twelve participants, bringing into stark relief the violence experienced by the IDPs. Thirteen years ago Evans would have been fifty two years old, which makes his story of his physical beating all the more difficult to hear and humiliating to share. This physical violence, which is closely entwined with his perceived political affiliation, effectively strips him of his dignity as well his material possessions. He says: "after the beating I decided to leave that same night, leaving behind everything I owned. I had been breeding pigs, some goats and cattle; all this I had to leave behind". The beating renders him no more than a delinquent child in need of public corporal punishment. Such a statement is not meant to represent individuals like Evans as wholly passive victims. There is "agency" in Evans' decision to leave his possessions behind. Such statements do, however, bring to the fore the imbricated politics in and "disciplining" in displacements.

In the earlier narrative of 20-year-old Alex, his childhood memory of *and* the deployment of the word *ejected* is revealing, and is a seared memory of being unceremoniously carted from one space (a known and familiar home) to another space (the unknown). He tells us: "immediately after the announcement, the government lorries (trucks) came to ferry us to the designated areas".

Both narratives demonstrate the lack of volition afforded to the individuals deemed (ideologically) deviant. It is unconsciously astute that Evans uses the word "discipline" when he shares that sticks had been shaped and kept ready to beat and "discipline" those deemed as politically opposed. It is much more than the corporeal body that is attempted to be bent/rent and rendered pliable through the corporeal and corporal "disciplining". The sticks serve a panoptic (a la Foucault) role in keeping an eye on behaviour and political adherence and compliance. Evans' story is rendered even more poignant when he shares that the headmaster that he wished to request his children's transfer papers from, had suffered the same humiliating fate.

The narratives also shed light on how established kinship networks are impacted. Kinship networks, of course, speak to embedded social capital and currency that holds and glues together a community. Thus as Potts asserts, a major objective of Operation Murambatsvina (OM) was to displace, forcibly, into different spaces, "those urban people whose houses were demolished".

According to Potts:

The government's concerted efforts to force OM IDPs to move to rural areas included general exhortations to do so, and force. It [Caledonia] rapidly achieved an infamous reputation as a place of extreme deprivation and terrible environmental condition. (see Potts, 2008: 4)

The ideological rationale is to purposively destabilise any potential communal political affiliations to the opposition party. The government's own statistics indicate that about 570 000 people, or 133 534 households, were subject to such (political) displacement, this being the estimate of the population housed in the 92 460 dwelling units demolished throughout the country (Potts, 2008: 1). Thus effectively over half a million people are left (to attempt) to make sense or order out of the massive and violent disruption and relocations.

Thus sense-making is about coming up with and constructing a plausible map "of a shifting world" (Ancona, 2012: 3), that one is able to navigate in and amidst the ongoing complexity of the world. However, it is also about rendering that complexity into action. Evans' immediate response and action was to leave, and to leave behind his emotional and material attachments and possessions. This *movement away* from the violence "forces" and compels his migratory path away from and "dislocates" him from his established (fifteen year-long) roots. There is, however, I contend, powerful hidden agency in his seemingly "docile" (Foucault, 1977) escape. He surrenders his possessions and seizes a course of action that (attempts to) take him away from the violence that he was forced to endure.

Space and place are dynamic constructions being shaped by the meanings assigned by inhabitants. Thus even though Evans was happy in Mutawatawa as he had assigned meaning to the space as place and "home", he exercised a level of agency in leaving that home. Within the theoretical paradigm of sense-making, it is suggested that in different situations individuals are impacted by and acted upon by "constraining forces of structural power" (Savolainen, 2006: 1117). However, as Savolainen himself points out, people may also be agentic and act as "sites of power to challenge and resist the constraints and to find substituted ways to continue

moving” (2006: 1117). While Alex tells us that his family is transported by the large trucks, he also shares his memories of other “stubborn” individuals who resisted. This resistance, he tells us, was countered with the state’s response to abandon the resisters with having to make their own way out of the area. Every sense-making instance in one’s life or current cluster of lived circumstance is understood as emerging “from a past in the present and moving toward a future”. This, according to Brenda Dervin, one of the early writers who expanded on the notion of sense-making, “suggests that the sense-maker is assumed to be simultaneously situated and trans-situated” (see Dervin, 1999: 733), meaning that they act from both within the situated event or action, as well as from outside it. This action does not come easy and is attached to a hefty price tag. The so called “stubborn resisters” eventually had to move, but had already surrendered the assigned designated transport to Caledonia. And Evans’ decisive departure meant he had to leave his valuable stock of pigs and sheep behind. Sense-making thus demands immense courage, as there is a need to comprehend the uncertainty (Ancona, 2012: 4) and act upon that assembled understanding, none of which is undemanding or painless.

The reiterative reality of displacement

Yonela is 37 years old and came from Porta Farm to Caledonia in September 2004 during the Harare City Council evictions. She utters with a discernible shudder that she will never forget that time because “it was the rainy season”. The messiness and opaque muddiness that seasonal rains churn up is evocative and allegorical of the messiness unleashed by the relocation:

Prior to this fifteen year stay at Porta Farm, my family had been forcibly moved from Mbare and some had come from Epworth. The final eviction came about after a number of bitter fights with authorities. We were told that we would be sent to different transitional settlements. In a bid to split us into different communities, the authorities would select a few families from Section A and combine them with some from Section H. People protested as the system totally disregarded the old communities which had held people together during the stay in Porta Farm. When the trucks came to take the people to their new settlement, only a few families responded. The next day, an army truck drove through the settlement throwing out pieces of paper notifying us that we should have destroyed our homes and vacated the place by 6am the following day. Again people did not pay attention. Around ten o’clock in the morning of same day, demolition trucks arrived and started destroying the houses in the settlement. There

was chaos everywhere with women wailing and men shouting abusive language. When one truck buried a child alive, people could not stand and watch anymore. They started throwing stones and objects at the trucks and the trucks had to retreat. The state authorities then sent riot police who threw tear gas at the people. We fought back which led to many people being injured and a number of children were said to have died. Eventually all of us had no option but to move.

To many of the families such as that of Yonela's, whose map of the world was unceremoniously redrawn by their relocation, the need to come up with a plausible understanding or meaning of the relocation, lies in tandem to being able to quickly adapt and survive; in other words, it is an effort towards the process of "structuring the unknown" (Ancona, 2012: 4). Yonela went on to deepen her narrative:

Having experienced forced migration before, I did not want to move. The first one had occurred when I was only fourteen years old (...) The news that the new settlement was only a temporary and transitional further fuelled everyone's hesitancy. Emotions were running high as people were angered by the manner in which the whole process had been carried out and the authorities' disregard of the people. No one knew what the new settlement was like but everyone assumed that they would have to restart their lives. So we faced the new life with a lot of trepidation and anxiety.

In many cases, as Savolainen (2006: 1119) reminds us, "the step-taking is repetitive in nature" for the simple reason that the uncertainty experienced, in this instance, in the context of forced relocation, is far from resolved and has occurred before.

In 1992, Chitekwe-Biti (2009) tells us, 1500 families were forcibly removed from informal settlements in Epworth and Mbare to Porta Farm, ten kilometres from Harare. When a group of local businessmen bought a horticultural farm adjacent to Porta Farm, the residents were once again evicted through the Operation Murambatsvina to Caledonia, and some to Hopley which is located south of Harare. Thus many of the residents of Caledonia have experienced forced migration at least twice in the last two decades. Chitekwe-Biti (2009) asserts that some residents of Caledonia had been forcibly relocated about four times in fifteen years. The experienced reality of livelihoods and lives fragmented and fractured by (multiple) forced relocation is echoed in the stories that the participants share. And while reports such as IDMC (2008) and even sensitively and evocatively written articles such as Chitekwe-Biti (2009) reveal such statistical realities, it is only in and through the empirically gathered narratives of the actual "migrants" that

we are able to gain a qualitative sense of the enormity and scale of their dislocation.

Yonela's dislocation and relocation (as that of many of the other inhabitants in Caledonia) has been repetitive, meaning that the response and order-making is likewise repetitive. Almost a full decade after being relocated to Caledonia, all the participants interviewed, like the other thousands that are compelled to "squat" in Caledonia, are still deeply uncertain about their future(s). The rupture and discontinuity (as with the earlier story and move(s) shared by Evans), is repetitive and ongoing or continuous. Put simply, it appears as a never-ending journey that renders the migrants as transient – no matter how many years they live/squat in a space. They in turn are compelled to ingeniously craft sense and order out of this chaos and endeavour to continue living their lives, even through extreme loss as with the loss of the children mown down by the trucks.

The continuous moving ahead is in turn precipitated by rupture and chaos (or discontinuity) and Chia explains that it is at these moments of rupture that "phenomena have to be forcibly carved out of the undifferentiated flux of raw experience and conceptually fixed and labelled so that they can become the common currency for communication exchanges" (Chia, 2000: 513). Chia here is referring to the act of taking the chaos of what is happening around us and fixing a communal order which works to (if only temporarily), allow the displacees to go on with their lives. The undifferentiated flux of raw and painful experience is captured and the individual acts in the overall narrativised "telling" of the actions in each of the participants' stories; Yonela's retelling of demolition trucks arriving and destroying the houses (and taking the lives of the children) and of there being "chaos everywhere with women wailing and men shouting abusive language" is the raw "undifferentiated" experience that Chia (2000) talks about. It is also captured in both the corporal beating of Evans, and the truck burying a child alive. Chia's point regarding the conceptual fixing and labelling of that undifferentiated raw experience into phenomena, "so that they can become the common currency for communication exchanges" (Chia, 2000: 513), refers to the fact that, often responses to chaos, are communal and group generated.

While communal currency may dictate that there is no recourse but to go to the place designated as the relocation site (i.e. Caledonia), arriving there, continues and perpetuates the uncertainty and chaos.

Struggling to make sense of being displaced

Making sense from the chaos and sense-less-ness is not an automatic process and each individual has their own way of assembling and piecing order together. For many displaced individuals forced to leave their homes, much of the early grasp at making sense can be seen in their desperate need to erect new physical shelters and begin to claim some new rootedness in the space and to attempt to turn the space into a "place" and home.

Shoko, a gentle looking middle aged man shares:

All our fears were confirmed when we arrived at the new settlement. Before many boreholes could be sunk, water was delivered to us twice a day by water tankers. Queues were long and sometimes one would go without drinking water. We used this water for drinking purposes and bathed in the nearby stream which was polluted by sewer. Many people suffered from skin rashes. We were literally dumped on the open site with no shelter. As it was the rain season, for many days, the people endured the downpours without any form of cover. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other organisations brought blankets, clothes and other non-food items to use. UN gave us tents. We received food rations from the same organisations but these could never suffice. As people had generally no source of income, we were totally dependent on these donors for a long time.

Another participant Tumi shares:

Everyone's major worry is whether they would not be moved again. The last experience of being moved after having stayed at Porta Farm for nearly 14 years proved to us that the length of the stay at a place did not necessarily guarantee that we would not be moved (...) I think that our fate hangs in the balance as not a single one of us has title deeds to their plots as proof of ownership.

Sense-making is most often needed when our understanding of the world becomes unintelligible in some way. This occurs when the environment is changing rapidly, presenting us with distasteful and painful surprises for which we are unprepared, or confronting us with adaptive rather than technical problems to solve (see Ancona, 2012: 4). Adaptive challenges are those that require a response outside ones existing repertoire and are "often present as a gap between an aspiration and an existing capacity" (Ancona, 2012: 4). All of the displaced individuals in Caledonia aspired to have permanent homes, roots and a stable community and a safe environment for their children. However, this aspiration is a massive gap away from what they have the capacity to accomplish in Caledonia. This gap is captured poignantly in John's narrative below:

This place was a forest. Homes were scattered all over. Some friendly people received me and offered me the use of their unoccupied room. It had no roof but I sourced some roofing materials and roofed it. Eventually, I moved out and built my own room. The houses we built were just hastily made and as a result of this my wife was struck by lightning and died in this house in 2006.

The gap between the aspiration (to have safe shelter) and to actually possess the capacity (to build a safe shelter) is what may have cost his wife's life. However, there is agency in the fact that John was able to source and scavenge materials to cover the initial shelter and then move on to build his own room.

In a rather erudite and insightful paper on displaced agency in the context of dialysis patients, Wen-yuan Lin asks how the agency of the subaltern comes to be conceptualized within the intersection of multiple worlds (see Lin, 2012). His article elaborates an alternative framework which focuses on the displacement of agency. By examining the case of dialysis patients, the article explores the "displacing practices" that follow the disruption of routines in dialysis. Although operationalising and deploying the term "displacement" here differently to how it is used in the context of my study, Lin's rather powerful paper probes the "patterns of dynamics that arise in different subaltern contexts; examining the different tactics subalterns devise to manage the intersection of multiple worlds and the consequences for their agency" (Lin, 2012: 2). Although set in a wholly different context to migration or internal displacement, Lin's paper offers semiotic signposts and compels us to consider the possible ways in which the patterns or socio-material performances of individuals (in the case of this study, the social-material practices of IDPs) allow us to discern the multiple and different forms of less visible agency that exist.

Lin's study found that his patients did not overtly challenge the biomedical world but sustained and kept "their alternative subaltern world alongside or within one that was hegemonic" (Lin, 2012: 13). One often forgets that agency unfolds in situated enactments and responses to challenges as they arise. Likewise, sense-making often involves moving from the simple to the complex and back again. The move to the complex occurs as new information is collected and new actions are taken. Then "as patterns are identified, and new information is labelled and categorized, the complex becomes simple once again" (Ancona, 2012: 8), with a situated level of understanding.

Enactments of agency

There are different configurations of agency and the situated responses within what Lin (2012: 3) refers to as "socio-material practices". In the context of my participants, these in turn, reveal the specificity of subaltern agency.

Thoko says:

It was very difficult to comprehend abandoning Porta Farm for Caledonia. Nothing made sense. We were not given anything to start the new life. We were also not compensated for the losses they incurred when their homes were destroyed. My mother suggested that we could go and clear a little area as we waited the final relocation. My mother said it was pointless to resist the orders from the government as she had had a similar experience previously. So my family would walk to Caledonia everyday where we chose a spot and started clearing it. Everyone had so many unanswered questions about the future.

While initially such disruption renders agency indeterminate, situated responses and enactments of agency later emerge. Thus although Thoko's mother says it is pointless in resisting the hegemony of the government, she exercises her agency in walking to Caledonia every day and attempting to prepare the space in a bid to turn it into a habitable place and possible home. This situated agency can further be seen in how the family managed the living conditions:

We used pit latrines or toilets which we dug for ourselves. No public transport can come into our area as there are no proper roads. It takes a lot time to adapt to conditions in the area but we are sort of used to everything now and we believe that they have made the best of the situation.

Joseph tells:

It was extremely difficult as my family and everyone else around us had no source of livelihood in the initial stages of the relocation. Eventually, people grew little vegetable patches in their little plots and learned to survive. I think this this place is better because there are no thieves like in Porta Farm...

An elderly participant Muriel discernibly weary in her replies sighs. 67-year-old Muriel shares:

My family have tried to make our lives as comfortable as is possible under the circumstances. We moulded bricks and built a room when the tent got too old. When it is the dry season, we cook outside using firewood and only use paraffin stoves when it is raining as it is expensive. The area has no trees now which we can cut for firewood so we go to Chishawasha, a farm owned by the Roman Ca-

tholic Church where we cut dry logs for firewood. This is not lawful so we have to do this very early in the morning around three in the morning to evade arrest. Many people have started small businesses selling food items in their tuck-shops which has alleviated our challenges in accessing basic food items like bread. Life for the family has improved somewhat but life in Caledonia is still very hard for people who have no source of income like me.

SUBALTERN AGENCY AND IDPs IN CALEDONIA

While agency may appear primarily about autonomy and the free capacity to act and to transform social structures, there are different configurations and regimes of (situated) agency for the subaltern. The narratives shared by the people living in Caledonia can be perhaps seen as subaltern, and without agency limited and constrained as they are by what they can do, and by what resources they have in which to change their lives. In poignant and in empirical terms, however, they bring to life Lin's (2012) perceptive point that most theories erroneously fail to recognize that agency is performed differently in different contexts.

Through the narratives of the people who have been "both physically and psychologically displaced", who move from homes and orientation to dislocation and disorientation, through processes of forced reorientation, we come to see layers and levels of (subaltern) agency and see space (Caledonia) as having a structuring dimension.

The notion of "subaltern" is perhaps most popularly known through the work of critical theorists, the seminal thinkers: Gramsci, Guha and Spivak. However, as Bojsen succinctly points out, in a contemporary context, "living violent and traumatic sorts of migration ... the relation between location, political authority and belonging or 'homeliness' is conceived and lived differently ...".⁹ Put simply, both the "subaltern" as well as "agency" thus take on contemporary and situated meanings and contexts.

What is the point of recognising that the displaced people living in Caledonia possess agency?

Perhaps I can answer through the words of Heidi Bojsen who asks: "What heuristic value lies in knowing how they 'perform' the agency that is theirs?" Bojsen poses this question in a Research Seminar that she advertises online. And in the context of this study, I cannot but agree with her

⁹ Heidi Bojsen, "Migration, Theory, and Subaltern Agency", Doctoral Students' and Research Seminar, November 24th – 25th, 2009, http://www.mah.se/PageFiles/3460/MigrationINVITATION_folder.pdf?epslanguage=sv.

when she implies that it is critical to know that: "The subaltern do speak. Whether anyone understands or listens is a different matter".¹⁰

This paper is an attempt to listen.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the IDPs in Zimbabwe, mapping the narratives reveals that there are multiple enactments of agency. The enactment approach itself implies, Lin (2007) tells us, a "practical ontology". For Lin, this entails *not* construing reality as something that is constructed by pregiven actors, but seeing instead sustained enactments or performances. Enactment approaches do not assume anything "about the character of agency but seek instead to explore how this is constituted in multiple sites of practice" (Law, 2004, in Lin, 2012: 3), and the multiple way that agency may unfold.

This does not mean that the IDPs in Caledonia do not need internal governmental or international assistance, or that they have full agency to be able to craft and carve their futures. On the contrary, the narratives show that they are forced to perform and enact particular regimes of agency because they are severely and structurally constrained in multiple ways. The heuristic value of collecting narratives and mapping (situated) agency then comes to lie powerfully and potentially in creating visibility and audibility for communities that lie outside the framework of legally constructed political entities such as "refugee". The IDPs, however, are the invisible refugees, overlooked due to legal slippage. Thus the heuristic value in recognising and collecting their agentic narratives allow us to narrow the gaze on other kinds of subaltern identities of *both* their constraint and agency, and to endeavour to create space for a deepening of both the discourse relating to addressing the practical needs of the displaced. Since so much of aid and international enactments of humanitarian intervention are couched in and performed through legally constituted frameworks, it becomes critical and urgent to render greater visibility beyond quantitative assessments to these "plastic" migrants and their deprived homes and livelihoods.

¹⁰ Heidi Bojsen, "Migration, Theory, and Subaltern Agency", Doctoral Students' and Research Seminar, November 24th – 25th, 2009, http://www.mah.se/PageFiles/3460/MigrationINVITATION_folder.pdf?epslanguage=sv.

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»Plastični migranti« i uskraćena sredstva za život: preseljenje i prisilna migracija

Maheshvari Naidu

SAŽETAK

»Dobrovoljno« iseljavanje sve je, samo ne dobrovoljno ili potaknuto »slobodnom« voljom. Prisilna migracija i raseljavanje sa svoje strane skreću pogled na složenosti i bremenite stvarnosti koje se preklapaju u određenim prisilnim kontekstima »raseljavanja« i kretanjima ljudi te njihovim sredstvima za život. U radu se kroz prizmu teorije davanja smisla nastoji pokazati kako skupina interno raseljenih osoba u Zimbabveu pokušava nanovo izgraditi svoje raseljene živote. Svaki se prognani pojedinac, gledan kroz prizmu davanja smisla, promatra kao da se kreće kroz prostor i vrijeme u uzajamnom djelovanju s drugim (prognanim) pojedincima, kao i materijalnim i emocionalnim ostacima ili reliktima s kojima bi ponovno gradio i sastavio materijalno (i emocionalno) sklonište ili boravište dok istovremeno pokušava uspostaviti red u svijetu političke zmršenosti, goleme nesigurnosti i neprestane promjene. Prihvatanje mikroanalitičke perspektive i fokusiranje na »prostor« (nasuprot »mjestu« ili domu) omogućuju sagledavanje prostora kao socijalno i diskurzivno konstruiranog aspekta iskustava raseljene osobe. Baveći se narativima na uzorku dvanaesteročlane zajednice koja živi u naselju Caledonia u Zimbabveu, u radu se problematizira i »dovodi u pitanje« pojam podčinjenog subjekta u kontekstu raseljavanja. Kvalitativni podaci pak otkrivaju slojeve i višestruke razine vidljive oskudice kao i (ne)vidljivog djelovanja snažno prisutnog u akcijama raseljenih osoba.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: raseljavanje, izbjeglica, migracija, davanje smisla, prostor