

Professor Emeritus Gunnar Olsson
Department of Social and Economic Geography
Uppsala University
SE-75238
Uppsala
Sweden.
26th October 2010.

Deputy Registrar
Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Gangodawila
Nugegoda.

Acceptance of PhD Thesis

I certify that Rev. Pinnawala Sangasumana (Reg. Number (GS/Ph.D/Geo/3251/2007 and New Number 1353SS2007001) has carried out all amendments as suggested at the Viva Voce Examination to my entire supervision.



Supervisor

Professor Emeritus Gunnar Olsson

Prof. CKM Deheragoda
Department of Geography
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Gangodawila
Nugegoda.
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**MAPPING INBETWEENNESS:
THE CASE OF CONFLICT-INDUCED
INTERNALLY DISPLACED IN SRI LANKA**



by

Rev. Pinnawala Sangasumana

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the local supervision of Professor C.K.M. Deheragoda, Department of Geography, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, and foreign supervision of Emeritus Professor Gunnar Olson, Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University, Sweden, and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any University for the award of any degree / Diploma.

Signature:



Date: 18.08.2010

Rev. Pinnawala Sangasumana
Department of Geography
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Gangodawila
Nugegoda
Sri Lanka



Certification of the Local Supervisor

I certify that the above statement made by the candidate is true and that this thesis is suitable for submission to the University for the purpose of evaluation.

Signature: 

Date: 18th August 2010.

Professor C.K.M. Deheragoda
Department of Geography
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Gangodawila
Nugegoda
Sri Lanka.

Certification of the Foreign Supervisor

I certify that the above statement made by the candidate is true and that this thesis is suitable for submission to the University for the purpose of evaluation.

Signature



Date

August 9, 2010

Gunnar Olson

Professor Emeritus

Department of Social and Economic Geography

Uppsala University

Sweden.

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IN SRI LANKA**

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Rev. Pinnawala Sangasumana

ABSTRACT

Wherever it occurs, a conflict-induced internal displacement (CIID) creates a humanitarian, political, socio-cultural and environmental tragedy of great proportions. Attempts to redress this problem have been numerous but none has so far been able to offer a satisfactory solution. This failure necessitates the work done in this thesis. At the time of the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, Sri Lanka faced a phenomenal problem of having to care for hundreds of thousands of conflict-induced internally displaced persons (CIDPs). In this context there is a dire need to fill the void between policy and the practice of restoring these displaced lives. Hence, it is argued that the state of inbetweenness experienced by the displaced should be the focal point in any search for durable solutions to the problem of CIID.

Mapping inbetweenness is not only a cartographic exercise but an attempt to use the powers of human imagination to conceptualize the internal displacement as an indicator of the inbetweenness that pushes the CIDPs into a state of indecision and ambivalent behaviour, all as a result of experiencing uncertainty, dispossession, insecurity and change. The focus of this mapping exercise is to define, characterise and interpret the state of inbetweenness experienced by the CIDPs at every stage of the displacement-resettlement continuum. This knowledge is critical to the design of innovative solutions to the issues and challenges faced by the CIDPs. The research reported here achieves this by grounded research methods which were useful in the gathering and analysis of qualitative data obtained from the lived experiences of the CIDPs. The displaced studied here represent different ethnicities, different experiences and numerous geographic locations.

The geographic meaning of 'place' is wide and deep since it includes one's place in society. This research takes the position that by the same token 'displacement' also lends itself to a rich array of nuances and interpretations. One's place in the society is powerfully determined by his/her life goals and socio-geographical networks. This implies that displacement is a process through which they lose the power which was built up over the years. Hence, the study argues that restoring normal life to the displaced is in fact not merely an issue of returning to one's place of origin but a process that addresses the CIDPs state of inbetweenness and their ability to find their place in society. Geography, migration and regionalism interact in a special way in contexts of conflict and displacement. The experience of the CIDPs in Sri Lanka provides a unique example of this kind of interaction which is why this research devotes much attention to the contemporary Sri Lankan experiences of how geography, migration, and regionalism interact. An interesting repertoire of forced migration patterns, including in-flows, out-flows, mass movements and circular migrations, could be identified particularly in relation to the displacement of Vanni CIDPs. The study also shows how the regional geography of displacement is very important during the entire period of the armed conflict.

The study reveals that uncertainty, dispossession, insecurity and change-the four characteristics of inbetweenness-dominate pre-displacement, flight, encampment, and resettlement-the four stages in the displacement-resettlement continuum-respectively. The main argument here is that if there were a proper framework that could address the above four characteristics it would lead to a durable solution for the problems of the internally displaced. The study introduces the two concepts of *mandala* and *fix-points* where the *mandala of security* is founded on four essential fix-points: home-identity, family-relationship, livelihood-social status, and resource-accessibility. If the displaced are to be placed sufficiently in the *mandala* of security, these various material and intangible supports should be given to the reestablishment of these fix-points.