Displaced Sense: Displacement, Religion and Sense-making

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Abstract

Whether formally categorized as refugees or not, displaced migrants experience varying degrees of vulnerability in relation to where they find themselves displaced. The internally displaced furthermore squat invisibly and outside the boundaries of the legal framework and incentive structures accorded to those classified as 'refugee'. They are thus arguably, by and large, left to source sustaining solutions for themselves.

This article works through the theoretical prism of sense-making theory and works through the notion of crisis as a 'cosmology episode' (see Weick 1993). For Weick, a 'cosmological episode' occurs when people are suddenly and profoundly plunged into an awareness that the universe is no longer a rational and orderly system and experience themselves as being in a state of crisis. Crisis sense-making is in turn understood as a social process and a communicative phenomenon present in individuals' interaction with their (disrupted) and sometimes violent life-world, which in the instance of the internally displaced, is also one of disorder, crisis and discontinuity.

The article probes how internally displaced persons (IDPs) in one Zimbabwe settlement cope with the materialities of their disrupted lives through their personal scaffold of religious beliefs and behaviours. Using narrative inquiry with a sample community of five women and five men in Caledonia settlement in Zimbabwe, the article sheds light on how these individuals use their religious beliefs to cohere some semblance of order out of crisis typified by the structural violence of deprivation, poverty and dislocation. Findings suggest that, in the absence of security and a known and ordered future, the internally displaced in Caledonia settlement make sense of

their present reality and their precarious future within their settlement through the matrix of their beliefs, and exhibit resilience, trust and faith.

Keywords: religion, prayer, sense-making, God, displaced, resilience

Introduction: Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) - *Who are they?*

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in a very recent document entitled 'Global Overview' (2015), shares that at the end of 2014, Sub-Sahara Africa had 11.4 million internally displaced persons or IDPs from a lengthy list of 22 countries. Major contributors to these statistics were the Democratic Republic of Congo with 2.8 million, South Sudan (1.5 million), Somalia (1.1), Nigeria (1 million) and Central African Republic with 3 million IDPs. These figures are of course fluid as new conflicts and other causes of displacement erupt, and others cease. According to World Vision Africa (2006), conflict is claimed as the leading and principle cause of displacement. Christensen and Harild writing a few years later (2009) also concur that most internal displacement has been caused by armed intra-state conflict and violence.

Sadaf Lakhani in his World Development Report (2014:3) points out that 'IDPs remain citizens or habitual residents of a country and enjoy the same rights (sic) as the rest of the population'. Such a statement taken at face value is of course profoundly misleading. Lakhani's second point however, is much more instructive and sheds light on why this seemingly straightforward statement, is anything but clear-cut. For Lakhani goes on to add that these so called rights and the entitlements are not straightforward because of the IDPs' 'special situation, specific needs and the heightened vulnerability that flow from being displaced' (2014:3).

Such heightened vulnerability had of course had been acknowledged and captured in the 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) which points out that the internally displaced are;

> Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a

result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border[1].

Cast against the semantic landscape of the above definition of 'who' is displaced and 'how' one becomes displaced (conflict, war, violence and human rights violations, and to a lesser extent, human and natural disasters), the IDPs fall *outside* the legal and incentive framework afforded to those classified as refugee, but fall within the 1998 United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Forced Displacement. All of this is much more than semiotic wordplay (see also Naidu & Benhura 2015). An internally displaced person then, in terms of the accepted classificatory nomenclature, is <u>not</u> a refugee in that, while the latter crosses internationally set boundaries, the former's mobility is restrained within the country's legal borders (see Mooney 2005). IDPs are thus sometimes referred to as 'internal refugees' (Mooney 2005: 11) compelled to seek refuge in the same country as the experienced crisis.

Thus, the nomenclature transcends and goes beyond mere semantics. Categorizations or definitional issues for IDPs are however, critical as each of the ascribed groups of people is 'situated' and contextually vulnerable and in need of humanitarian intervention- but from different (legally and ideologically) sanctioned instruments and institutions. For further reading on the naming and classifying of IDPs in Africa and the legal framework needed for 'managing' internal displacement in Africa, the reader is pointed to the excellent and recent lengthy piece by Won Kidane (2011). As Kidane maintains, often IDPs are in as dire desperation as refugees (2011). This is certainly encapsulated in some of the narratives documented in this essay.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The statistical figures at the macro level paints a staggering picture of internally displacement individuals. It is however, in the materiality of the lives of the displaced that one can begin to assemble a measure of the empirical reality of *how* being displaced and having lives disrupted is actually experienced by the individuals.

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[1] http://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.html.

Thus while 'big data' and statistical information is crucial in affording macro level indices, such information just as often veils the lived actualities of lives. Hence one cannot but agree with Ferris & Winthrop (2011) who contend that much scholarship has focused on examining the root causes of displacement at the expense of addressing how the IDPs cope with the displacement experience. This is the point of insertion for this study which seeks to probe how a small sample of IDPs in Caledonia settlement in Zimbabwe eke meaning out of the crisis of their disrupted and displaced lives through recourse to their professed religion and religious beliefs.

I hasten to point out that the study was not pre-occupied with probing the specificities of the particular religion and religious doctrine or religious behaviours that the displaced individuals adhered to. Nor was the study concerned with *which* particular religion the individual followed or professed. Working on the understanding that the 'believer is always right' and that his/her professed 'religion is always the right religion' for them, the study was not designed to probe the experienced efficacy of any one religion, but rather to probe how the displaced individuals operationalised their particular religious beliefs in their context of their forced migration.

The study was also premised on the understanding that qualitative work and empirical work is able to create ethnographic snapshots into how religion and religious beliefs were drawn on in the contexts of the internally displaced in one particular Zimbabwean settlement for displaced individuals. The understanding was that such snapshots would offer empirically based data that transcended the statistical figures on the displaced, and would be able to offer a more intimate and critical grasp of how the displaced coped with and made sense of the various challenges and crises in their lives.

Crisis sense-making is understood as a social process and a communicative phenomenon present in individuals' interaction with their disrupted life-world. Using narrative inquiry with a core sample community of ten male and female individuals within an age spectrum of 25 to 75 years living in a settlement known as Caledonia, the article sheds light on how these individuals use religion to cohere some semblance of order out of crisis typified by violence, deprivation, poverty and alienation wrought by dislocation.

Sense-making is a process most lucidly defined by Weick (see Weick 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005). While there is also a large body of work around sense-making in the context of organisational structure (see

Weick 1979; Weick 1988; Weick 1993), in this article I operationalise sense-making as a theoretical tool (see also Glaser 1978; Dervin 1992; Moustakas 1994; Gross 2010) while drawing from some foundational tenets from sense-making in organisational psychology and render those tenets within a social science context and in the context of internally displaced persons. According to Merryn Rutledge (2009), sense-making is a way group members discover ways of understanding and talking about complexity within their lives. However, sense-making can also occur at various levels of aggregation or clusters (individuals, small or large groups and at the level of communities). In this article I am specifically concerned with individual sense-making.

From a theoretical perspective, the prismatic lens of sense-making theory is widened with the deployment of structural violence theory. While structural violence theory allows us understandings of the social injustice of the displacees' displaced and dispossessed lives, sense-making allows us to discern how they as individuals, understand this injustice in and against the context of their religious beliefs. Structural violence, as mapped by the pioneer on work in the field, Johan Galtung (1969), points us to the multiple dimensions along which violence can be understood and the spectrum of typologies it inhabits (personal, structural and cultural). While structural violence theory offers an aerial (over)view of the social and political structures that constrain the agency of the displaced individuals, sense-making theory allows a more 'terrestrial', closer and personal 'look' through the eyes of the displaced.

To this end, an exploratory study was designed within a qualitative paradigm and with qualitative methodological instruments in the form of semi-structured interview questions[2]. Triangulation methods of analysing observational data, follow up interviews and documentary analysis were also utilised. The collected data was then manually coded into particular dominant thematic threads which were rendered discernible through the theoretical lenses adopted.

Given the sensitive nature of the questions and the heightened vulnerability of the participants, care was taken to observe respect and an

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[2] A doctoral student who was herself a Zimbabwean resident acted as research assistant in conducting the interviews and transcribing the notes, translating from Shona where needed, although most of the interviews were in English.

ethical protocol that protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. To this end *nom de plumes* are used in the write up.

Forced Migration and the Internally Displaced in Zimbabwe, Caledonia: *The Cosmological Episode of Displacement*

Internally displaced persons inside Zimbabwe, according to Potts writing in 2006, numbered at over half a million (approx. 570 000). While there have been earlier displacements, much of this displacement came in the wake of what was termed Operation Murambatsvina. In May 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe launched Operation Murambatsvina, a state-sponsored campaign said to stifle and curb any independent economic and political activity in the country's urban areas.

Murambatsvina was also infamously known as the 'Clean the Filth Campaign' (see Bratton & Masunungure 2006). In the report submitted by a Unite Nations (UN) Envoy in 2005, it was reported that thousands of men, women and children had been left homeless in the aftermath of Murambatsvina. Bratton and Masunungure assert that:

> [I]n the aftermath of parliamentary elections that confirmed that ZANU-PF had lost political control of Zimbabwe's urban areas, the government cracked down. Its security apparatus launched a massive 'urban clean up' campaign called Operation Murambatsvina that was justified as a strategy to eradicate illegal dwellings and eliminate informal trade. As with earlier attacks on journalists and opposition parties, colonial-style legislation was invoked to regulate how people could house themselves or make a living (2006:1).

Those who were evicted and whose dwelling structures were razed were instructed, as Bratton and Masunungure tell us, to return to their 'homes' in Zimbabwe's rural areas regardless of whether they were born and bred urbanites or not (see Bratton & Masunungure 2006:9). Many, indeed thousands of course did not relocate to rural spaces as they no longer had birth or ancestral land or homes but sought other alternate urban dwelling spaces. Many ended up in settlement spaces such as Hopley and Caledonia.

Caledonia, the research site of this article, is situated 30 kilometers east

of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. It squats somewhat uncomfortably on the peripheral edge of Harare, sandwiched between Tafara, one of the oldest low income and high density residential areas and Zimre Park, a relatively new middle income residential area. Many of the over 30 000 individuals documented by Zimstat in 2012 arrived here in waves soon after May 2005, forcibly evicted and forced to migrated from long standing homes, family and neighbours and communities that they were embedded in (see Naidu 2016 forthcoming).

According to the Zimstat 2012 Census, Caledonia in 2012 was home to 7 955 households with an average size of 3.8 per housing unit and a calculated approximation of 30 202 people. This is a substantial number of people for an area largely made up of relatively densely packed and crudely constructed houses of 'tarp', plastic paper and other accessible and useable building materials.

The area is devoid of infrastructure such as developed roads, sewer systems, running water and electricity. There are also no formal schools except for some 'schools' run from homes or set under trees. The one simple clinic in the settlement is run by Harare City Council. Many people moved in the wake of violent destruction of their homes deemed as illegal structures by the government and its campaign to purge the areas of such illegal dwellings. Their storied narratives hold the descriptions of the violence and suddenness of the forced move.

> My parents died when I was very young and I grew up living with my aunt. I came to live here in Bobo when my aunt's rented room was suddenly destroyed. We used to rent in a verandah that had been converted into a room. The city council said this was illegal and the owner was ordered to destroy it or the authorities would come and destroy it. So we were left with nowhere to live. It was a shock. We came here in 2005 and found a piece of land to build our house. This is how I came to live here. I grew up and married my husband who also lived here (Participant June).
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> I have lived in Bobo since I was almost 20 years old. We came when my family lost their home during the Tsunami, the Murambatsvina. We had one tiny room which we shared with my parents and it was uncomfortable as my brothers also slept in the same room. I soon got married and went to live with my husband a little

further off. My husband and I were neighbours here in Bobo. We were fortunate to get a piece of land ... (Participant Primrose).

I came to live here straight after Murambatsvina. I used to live in Tafara with my family but we didn't have our own house. When Murambatsvina the Tsunami came, our rental cottage was violently destroyed and we could not understand it…we just followed others and got a space to build our own temporary house here. We left the people we knew. We have lived in this house for many years (Participant Prudence).

Displacement heightens vulnerabilities and Barutciski's point made just under two decades ago that intervention for IDPs has been '*ad hoc* and unreliable' (1998: 14) is still the reality for the current IDPs in Zimbabwe. The Kampala Convention (in principle) addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of both IDPs and hosting communities and article 9(2) of this charter mandates that the state is to provide food, water, shelter, health services, education and other social services (see Hassman-Howard 2010) for the internally displaced individuals within their borders. Though considered a 'soft' law, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GDIP) also reiterate relevant and basic human rights spelling out that each government has a responsibility towards their internally displaced people. Yet for the people of spaces such as Caledonia, this is a non-existent law. Structural violence, according to Ho (2007:4), has ''exploitation as the centerpiece', in this instance to be grasped as the extreme exploitation and violation of the rights of the internally displaced. Being uprooted violently and displaced from one's home, is an example of extreme crisis that is difficult to comprehend.

For Weick (1993), a 'cosmology episode' refers to the occurrence when people are suddenly and profoundly plummeted into feeling that the universe is no longer a rational and orderly system and they experience themselves as being immersed in a state of crisis. For Weick, 'what makes such an episode so shattering is that both the sense of what is occurring and the means to rebuild that sense collapse together' (1993: 633). Each of the stories above were shared by people who were visibly moved when recounting the events of being evicted. Each of the stories are also in some manner, echoed in all of the other participants' relocation stories. Indeed the subtext reverberates through the 'life-script' of thousands of others similarly displaced in

Zimbabwe. The 'cosmological' (al la Weick 1993) rupture is contained in the word 'destroyed' in story one and three, and in the word' lost' in story two; each in reference to the crisis of a home violently destroyed and lost.

Many of the displaced, the interviewed participants included, refer to the 'Clean-up Campaign' or Murambatsvina as the 'Tsunami'. The word indexes and captures the overwhelming and devastating effects and aftermath of the eviction campaign that literally impacted on over several hundreds of thousands of lives. I submit that while Weick may not have had such an incident such as Tsunami/Murambatsvina in mind when he coined his term, somehow the term, 'cosmological episode' is rather painfully apt in this instance in the devastation and disorder that it unleashed, ripping the fabric of the people's routine existence. A survey conducted in July 2005 in Harare, soon after the May 2005 evictions, surmised that 70% of 14 000 households had fallen prey to Operation Murambatsvina. The United Nations put the overall figure of people affected (by applying a multiplier effect) that included those indirectly affected by Murambatsvina and approximated the total impacted figure at a staggering 2.4 million.

The three participants above, although only three voices, in a sense are enacting the narratives of many others. They function as carriers of elements of the storied and lived trauma and disruption of over half a million people.

Caledonia thus became home (sic) to the causalities of the government program named Operation Murambatsvina. Caledonia was originally however, intended to be a temporary holding camp as people awaited resettlement elsewhere. Thus, Chitekwe-Biti points out that the people quickly constructed cheap housing units not adhering to building standards for formalised residential development (2009: 348).

Initially visible inside Caledonia were the trademark blue United Nations tents, testimony of the international organization's (and international community's) acknowledgement of the vulnerable status of this population. These were made available to the early waves and influx of displaced. Later waves of displaced people were left to source shelter for themselves. One of the informants poignantly said; *'Those who came from Kamombe and Porta were lucky because the United Nations gave them tents. They were better than most of us'.* Today a few tattered United Nation tents still stand amidst an array of other mainly make-shift housing units.

As Alexander Betts rightly reminds us, displacement and forced migration 'triggers' are of course not mono-causal (see Betts 2005).

Notwithstanding the multiple causal triggers leading to displacement in Zimbabwe, the bottom line in terms of where thousands of the internally displaced (IDP) found themselves, was the same, and many ended up in resettlement camps such as Caledonia.

Zimbabwe is thus home to a considerable large number of displaced individuals who are not transnationals or refugees from another country. This statement is literal in the most profound manner possible in that Zimbabwe is actually the host country and birth home to the displaced individuals who are citizens of the country. Ridderbos stresses that the Zimbabwean government however, does not acknowledge or officially profile the existence of the IDPs (see Ridderbos 2011), and in a sense their displacement is rendered invisible, in as much as they come to be rendered invisible. As Galtung reminded us, the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and as unequal life chances (1990:171). The earlier three narratives revealed how the people were left to fend for themselves even as they grew into adulthood, married and had children of their own, all the while remaining displaced and dispossessed.

Small sample communities are of course not generalizable, nor are they meant to be. The above stories however, carry certain archetypical narrative threads and are echoed across all the individuals interviewed. Each of the individuals, (interviewed separately) echoed each other in painting the circumstances of how they arrived in Caledonia, colloquially referred to as 'Bobo'. Embedded in their stories are elements of destruction, disruption, movement and relocation. The suddenness and the violence and cosmological rupture of the move into Caledonia (and a universe rendered irrational) is in turn replayed in each of the stories.

June's story holds the subtext of violence within her recollection of the words, when she says they told us *'destroy it or we [the government] will destroy it'*, while Prudence poignantly refers to her *'temporary house'* as the house that she has lived in *'for many years'*. This is again testimony to Galtung's (1990:171) thesis that structural violence breeds unequal power and consequently unequal life opportunities. The physical violence of homes demolished is, in this instance, discernible manifestations of larger structural inequalities that operate at the political level.

Both June and Primrose moved from being young women to eventually being married women, moving from one temporary structure to

another and carrying the 'temporariness' of both space and temporality with them. By that I mean, their living structure is referred to as 'house' rather than home, and its very location or spatiality in the resettlement camp is one of ongoing impermanence as many settled there with the (mis)understanding that they would be moved to better locations or be given allotments of land to build on.

Both women married men who were equally disposed and dis-possessed and who also lived in Caledonia, These circumstances cements the permanence of their temporary status as disenfranchised and displaced beings in Caledonia. As Kathleen Ho notes:

> The additional layers and multiple dimensions of structural violence are then built upon this fundamental inequality and manifest themselves in terms of economic and social inequalities … (Ho 2007:5).

The lives of the displacees further unfolded when they had children and became mothers, as with June and Primrose, or remained alone in precarious makeshift structures such as in the case of Clara:

> I remember we had to suddenly move here leaving people we knew…I never knew my own mother. I grew up with my older sister who died in 2013. I now live here alone (half her roof collapsed and the other half is black plastic sheeting held in place by bricks and rocks). When we moved here my sister was still alright (before her mental illness and death) and we both built this house. But it's not strong so now it's collapsing. When it rains, (pointing to some blankets draped to dry over the half wall) my roofs leaks and water gets into the house through the door so I get wet. In the morning I have to dry my blankets. I have no one to help me build a better house (Participant Clara).

Religion as Glue: Sense-making and Ordering in and through Cosmological Disorder

Perhaps as a response to a discerned need, there are many visible places of worship in and around Caledonia. Many are modest structures and many have

no formal structure at all but are merely a demarcated space set off by a rudimentary arrangement of boulders. These are mainly then tented structures or open air structures that represent several different Christian denominations. There is a proliferation of a large array and list of churches. Although not a comprehensive list, some of the churches in and immediately around Caledonia are; Chiedza Chavatendi, Johane Masowe Vadzidzi (one of the oldest in the area), Johane Masowe YeChishanu (a break-away from the previous church), Mugodi, ZCC- Zion Christian Church, Johane Marange, Zviratidzo Zvavapostori, Nguo Tsvuku, Jerusarema, Glory to God, Paul Mwazha, Guta ra Jehovah, Bethsaida Apostolic Church. These churches represent Catholic, Anglican Lutheran, Apostolic, and include the simple masowe or open sites of worship constructed and marked by rudimentary boulders. Also in Caledonia are practitioners of forms African Traditional Religions referred to as '*chivanhu'* or '*chikaranga'* in the local language. There are also practitioners known by the local inhabitants who offered herbal medicine or '*muti'* and who were called *'chiremba'* or *n'anga*. These practitioners appeared to work mainly from their homes offering private consultations. Most of the participants interviewed however, referred to the churches they attended with only two participants overtly referring to traditional or indigenous forms of religion.

Practice of *chivanhu* in Caledonia is however, usually very private and one 'comes to know of' the 'herbal doctor' through other local people. From what one is able to gather, it appears more common in the various rural areas than in urban or peri-urban settlements in Zimbabwe. One also gathered, though observations and conversations with the participants that there are limited spaces to practice African Traditional Religion in Caledonia in the same manner as in the rural spaces (drum beating and accompanying beer rituals etc.). The participants interviewed, like the majority of adherents in Caledonia, appeared to attend a church or masowe.

One of the participants, who attended the open air masowe, the middle aged Rachel, was very vocal when asked if religion had any meaning for her. She shares:

> Religion shapes my behaviour. It also helps me cope with life here in Bobo. After the Tsunami my husband left for South Africa and doesn't send me anything. Even when he was here, he would beat me and sold our little household property to buy beer. These days when I don't have

food in my house, I just pray to God. Religion helps me to get through all this.

The masowe that Rachel attends is similar to many others in the area. Seen from a distance, the big red banner with a white cross stitched in the centre, flaps casually in the breeze marking this as a place of worship. It is a few kilometers north of Caledonia and has been continuously functional as a place of worship for more than a decade. Commonly known as 'masowe,' which is a common Shona name for an 'African Church' or place of worship, these are usually in an open space or under trees. In this instance, the masowe is set in the open. The earthen floor has been beaten into hard bare ground from the constant trampling. The place is devoid of any large trees to shield the religious group from the glare of the sun, rain or dusty winds. The place is fringed by small boulders of varying shapes and sizes forming a rudimentary circle. To the far easterly corner, within the circle and below the red banner, sit three huge boulders which act as the focal point and the inner central sanctum of sorts during the meetings. Mid-week women worshippers are seen to use the small shrubs surrounding the place to dry their babies' nappies and other items of clothing. Except for the permanently mounted red flag and a constant trickle of worshippers, there is little else that points to the place being used for religious purposes.

For many like Rachel, this simple space is a powerful nexus where she is able to gather with other worshippers from the settlement to, among other things, 'cope with life'. She continues to share what religion means to her:

Religion … Religion means that I can bring all my problems to God. It also means I can pray for my life. It helps me not to be anxious about many things. I accept everything that happens to me because I know that God has something that He wants me to learn from my situation. Even if the government came and destroyed our houses again I would wait for God's solution. It means that I can be protected.

Daniel Simonsen's (2012) work and paper on sense-making emphasises two aspects of the sense-making process that can clearly be discerned in Rachel's narratives above; the phenomenon of resilience and the flexible attitude and trust. These are points that repeatedly surface in the narratives of many other informants.

Rachel's attitude, replayed in many of the other participants interview-

ed, showed a profound sense of resilience and trust (in God) to restore a sense of rationality or logic and order to a situation that was otherwise irrational and disordered. Such resilience and trust that either order would return to the world, or that there was *some* semblance of order amidst the chaos, is echoed and amplified in sixty five year old Felix's story.

Felix who had 'grown up' in the Roman Catholic Church, but now attended the Bethsaida Apostolic Church shared:

> Aaaah … what would I do without religion. As a man you can't just sit with no protection…..you die!! Would I still be alive today if I did not pray? I turned to Christianity because I was tired of going to the n'anga and they would lie to me. If it weren't for this religion I would have been killed in 2002. I kept on facing bad luck such as my wife being struck by lightning, here. I also wanted to find out why my house was destroyed in 2005 … some people's cottages were not destroyed. I get answers and solutions to my troubles. Religion has also protected me. Bad luck is not following me everywhere now. I have been allocated a stand (residential stand) through the housing cooperative I joined and I can start building a house as soon as I get money. So religion has changed things for me.

The sense of the talismanic ability (against experienced violences) of Felix's religion, is captured in the belief and sense that his religion offers protection against ill luck, misfortune and even potential death. For Felix, it was his faith as a Christian that carried him through misfortunate and a world that haunted him with bad luck and death (of his wife). His implicit trust in his faith, is in turn, as he explains, rewarded with life and a renewed sense that there was new meaning and possibilities in the future. Maitlis & Sonenshein (2010) explain that the crisis sense-making tradition emphasises the sense-making aspect of crisis and change-processes. Simonsen (2012:4) further unpacks the idea that sense-making is a 'communicative phenomenon existing in individuals' interaction with their life-world'. Felix's narrative of religion offering him protection from the misfortunate that befell him as a displaced person, offers him the rationale for the events and allows for (ordered and) continuing interaction with his current (still displaced) life-world and reality.

Petrus is 73 years old. He shared that in his new church, 'there is a lot

of freedom to do a lot of things' whereas the old church 'was too traditional and strict'. He says:

> At my age and after many evictions…I've learnt not to worry too much. I have been in this area for nearly eleven years now. Living in this area you see so many people suffering that you get used to poverty. When things become really hard I read my Bible (pats the Bible on the table). What keeps my hope is the knowledge that the local authorities have come into our area and fears about being forcibly removed again are gone. (Points at his neighbour's incomplete house) look, many people are now building better houses. Everything is going to be okay in future.

While this was not the same optimism of permanence shared by others around him, Petrus' resilience and faith is perhaps a reference to one of the theoretical constructs embedded in Weick's sense-making. According to Weick, 'sense-making is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy' and creates 'understanding through approximations' (Weick *et al.* 2005: 413-14) or a counter narrative rendered into plausible terms.

Petrus is not exaggerating when he refers to multiple moves by telling us that he has learnt not to worry too much *'after so many evictions'*. Chitekwe-Biti (2009) asserts that some people living in Caledonia had been forcibly relocated about four times in fifteen years. In 1992, 1 500 families were forcibly removed from informal settlements in Epworth and Mbare to Porta Farm, ten kilometers from Harare (see Chitekwe-Biti 2009). When a group of local businessmen bought a horticultural farm adjacent Porta Farm, the people were once again evicted through Operation Murambatsvina, to Caledonia and some to Hopley settlement which is located south of Harare. Thus, some of the residents of Caledonia have experienced forced migration at least twice in the last two decades. Many, like Petrus, have been evicted more than twice.

However, partly due to advanced age and the stoicism that perhaps come with senior age, and partly due to his professed faith in his religion, Petrus views the 'local authorities' in his area as the harbingers of positive change. Although this view was not shared by other participants interviewed from the same area, Petrus was making sense of his future by approximating what might happen to enhance and better the (collective) future. He has thus

rendered his view of the local authorities in his settlement space, into *plausible* terms.

Another theoretical construct embedded in sense-making, is that of using 'retrospect' and looking back to make sense of the puzzling or the overwhelmingly chaotic reality observed (Weick *et al.* 2005: 413). Consider the narrative shared by one participant, Jonah, which mentions how he sees religion is bringing order to a chaotic and troubled world.

> Church starts at around 12 and ends after 5pm and most of the time we'll be singing and then the leader prays for people. Those with problems kneel before him and he lays his hands on them. There are usually many people who need prayers because this world has so many troubles.
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> Everything is going on well for me but from 2005 to 2008, after the eviction … (Shakes his head). I had so many problems. I was so poor that if I wasn't a strong person I would have committed suicide. I didn't do it because I knew things will turn around one day. All these rich people we see today were once poor as well so I was hopeful that things would change …. and they did.

The church that Jonah attends is an example of a more 'formal' structure. It is ensconced in the midst of mostly incomplete 'concrete block houses', in one of the so called better parts of Caledonia. Here the green and blue tent clearly stands out. This tented structure is the space occupied by the Anglican Church. At the entrance of the unfenced yard is a neatly painted metal sheeting stating the scheduled times of worship.

The interior takes one by surprise. Brown wooden benches are arranged in neat rows ready for the next congregational meeting. The floor is a rough surface that has been rendered polished by hundreds of feet over hundreds of occasions. Up at the front facade, on an elevated platform, is a table used as a form of pulpit. The tent has no form of ventilation and one observes members raising the flaps to allow for circulation of air during the main meetings. It is spaces such as these that several of the participants refer to as their sanctuary in their search for meaning and direction in their lives. Another participant, Sam, stresses the need for religion.

> I go to Zviratidzo Zvavapostori. It's there (points southwards). Life is

hard. If I'm not serious with religion I would not even get the part time jobs. If I use the holy water from church, I get called for a part time job. So if I just sit at home drinking beer and taking drugs…my family would starve I'm telling you. The next thing is I would start robbing people in order to survive. So religion gives me direction in life…I discovered that it was necessary to pray.

Sense-making is about action. It is about 'what's going on here followed by what do I do next?' (see Weick *et al.* 2005: 414). Religion appears to offer also the means to 'turn ordinary water' into 'efficacious water' and bestow upon it the value of a useable spiritual artefact. Similarly another informant shared:

We use anointing water, anointing oil and bracelets. These work in different ways. Some are for healing, some for deliverance from bad luck in the family or for protection.

This is reiterated in many of the words of several participants, including Sam who also reiterates the need for religion for action. Other participants alluded to the social capital embedded in religion and the religious congregation.
You know if you don't go to church, who will bury you when you die… were the poignant words of one young woman. She continued:

People from church come to sing and help out cooking during funerals. So religion is important to me. When you are sick, you go to church and the elder prays for you. I tell the older women kumasowe (at church) and they pray for me…
(On being asked how these prayers are conducted), you kneel before the leader and the leader shakes your head….sometimes your demon will come out and you get well. Sometimes you can be given holy water to drink, sprinkle in or outside your house or bath in it. We also get stones for our protection which we can keep in our houses. It is good. He helps me and other people not to give up. Even when I feel like going back to the beerhall (euphemism for prostitution), I think what other Church members will say. Now I don't go to the beerhall often, I only go there when I don't have anything to eat at all. But my church doesn't allow this at all so I try not to go back there many times.

According to Weick et al, sense-making responds to ambiguity and uncertainty and re-organizes the uncertainty and flux into meaning and order (2005: 412). Sense-making through resilience, faith and trust in religion and the wider religious community within the context of the social capital and kinship it offers, involves relabeling and re-categorising to stabilise what would be otherwise overwhelming meaningless experience.

One female informant confided that if not for religion, she would long have made the 'beerhalls' her home. The expression 'go to the beerhalls' emerged as euphemism for turning to prostitution. Although not an explicit focus of this study, it also emerged that 'going to the beerhalls' was not uncommon among many other women, especially those from single headed households.

I was of course interested in probing, given the extreme sense of displacement and dislocation shared by all the participants, whether they had felt abandoned by their religion or their God. Many of their responses seemed to echo the one below:

> If you have been a lodger in life, without a house or even a job to pay rent, you ask God this question many times. There are many times when I have asked God if he has left me (Participant June).

One wonders then, how they could continue to eke sense out of their predicament and even save a space for God and religion in their lives. However, such conditions also appear fertile grounds for sense-making to occur. In other words when complexity and uncertainty are high, and ambiguity is great, sense-making is potentially powerful. Consider the narrative below:

> I survive by selling paraffin to the residents supplement my husband's salary. So yah, I feel abandoned so many times. Every time when life is so hard and you don't have any plan on how to get out of the situation, you obviously feel like God has forgotten you. When this happens to me, I pray for God to give me ideas to solve my problems.

It is highly revealing that even in the midst of feeling temporarily abandoned by God, instead of turning their back on religion; the participants, like Rose

above, turns and appeals to God to remember her and to offer her solutions. This immense trust further allows sense-making in and through the deprivation of their present lives and the ambiguity of their futures. Perhaps Jomo sums it up best when he says:

> Everyone who is normal I think feels that God has left them at one point. This place used to make me feel like that. I would say to myself, why am I living here? Why am I very poor? But now things are better. If they give us residential stands, we shall build our houses then we won't worry about our children not having proper houses.

Some may see the above narrative as running counter to sense-making, and that a sense of abandonment reigns in place of a sense of re-ordering. To me however, Jomo's closing words that 'things are now better', speaks volumes. For Jomo order has been restored. Sense-making is not a blind acceptance of order where there is none, but rather calling on and assembling order out of disorder. This incredible resilience was something that most participants appeared to share.

Jomo ends his interview with these unprompted words:

> *I also pray for my soul to go to the right place after I die.*

The statement above is poignantly powerful. While it may appear like something that any other believing Christian might say, in this particular instance, the subtext is moving. For it is uttered by someone, who like thousands of others, has been displaced, belongs elsewhere, and is not in their 'rightful place'.

Conclusion

The material reality for thousands of internally displaced individuals in Caledonia and other settlements such as Hopley, is that these displaced people have largely become invisible and non-existent. They have been by and large, left to source solutions, shelter and livelihoods, education and health services, mainly by themselves within the context of lack of resources and constrained agency.

According to the understanding of structural violence theory, individual agency is implicated through structures that reflect an unequal distribution of power. The violence is itself insidiously built into the very fabric and social structure, and shows up as asymmetrical power and as unequal life chances (see Galtung 1990:171).

While such realities severely constrain and restrict agentic effort, my contention is that it is also the very conditions such as violent eviction and displacement, which appear to provide powerful occasions for sense-making, especially for those individuals with strong religious beliefs. This is not to be understood as minimising their trauma of having been displaced. Nor is it being dismissive of their times of existential doubt as to whether they have been abandoned by God. Sense-making however, appears to come into play even as, and *while* the individuals' routine is suddenly and violently interrupted, and they are compelled to ask themselves, and those around them, *what is going on*? (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010: 557).

Structural violence theory makes clear that that 'violences' are perpetuated by the so called 'hard surfaces of life' (see Farmer 2005:40). This includes political violence and levels of poverty, as constraints on individual agency. However, the sample of participants interviewed reveal that notwithstanding the structural (and physical) constraints experienced, they have reclaimed some 'normality' through making sense of and bringing a semblance of order to their disrupted lives with the help of their religious beliefs. Their disrupted lives are the material and profound casualities of wider economic and political inequalities. They have however, made use of what Weick would see as 'contextual rationality and predictability' in their life worlds (Weick 1988; Weick 1993). The narratives of the sample group and the accompanying observational data make clear that there is a relatively large number of churches and masowe in Caledonia. From what the displaced individuals shared, it seems that their religion and their sense of resilience and trust (in God) has offered the matrix to be drawn on in order to render a rationale for their reality and make sense of the materiality of their lives.

Sense-making is innate to all, since, as Gross points out, all individuals either consciously or unconsciously construct meaning by cognitively bridging gaps (see Gross 2010) in what they see, and what they understand by what they see. Religion and religious beliefs appear to in turn offer the scaffold around which to cohere sense and enact trust and resilience.

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