

International Aid Ideologies and Policies in the Urban Sector

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From *terra nullius* to *Aidland*. Different urban geographies of post-tsunami reconstruction in Sri Lanka.

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Introduction

The tsunami of 26 December 2004 destroyed lives and entire Indian Ocean coastal communities hitting the west coast of north Sumatra, Aceh Province in Indonesia, in parts of western Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, eastern India and the Maldives with terrible damage to lives, livelihoods and properties. In the aftermath of this massive natural disaster, some 229,886 people were dead or missing, and more than 1,8 million displaced across 12 affected countries¹.

In response to appeals for assistance from affected countries, military forces from 35 countries, 16 UN agencies, 18 IFRC response teams, several hundreds or even thousands of INGOs, countless private companies and local civil society groups provided emergency food, water, medical services and shelters to the estimated five million people in need of assistance (Brochard, 2005).

On the official side, the Indian Ocean tsunami generated a record amount of aid, pledges and donations which topped \$14 billion and sparked an extraordinary mobilisation of resources for relief and assistance by private citizens and corporations, INGOs and governments in the affected countries². Data which again show us the *Janus* face of the disaster itself well represented in the geographical dichotomy between “*Aidland and terra nullis*”, or as a UN officer told the IFRC’s *World Disasters Report* recently published “*Depending on how you look at it, you can say this has been the best-funded emergency in the world – or the most expensive humanitarian response in history*” (Batha, 2005).

As many other aid workers I was involved in the aftermath of the tsunami, both in Banda Aceh and in Sri Lanka. This paper is drawn on my field experience in Sri Lanka and on a follow-up research on post-tsunami reconstruction and recovery. The reason on focusing on Sri Lanka is mainly due to the fact that the tsunami forced a million Sri Lankans from their homes, adding a new displacement crisis to that caused by the island’s long-running civil war in a way creating double layers vulnerability according the two displacement causes: from conflict and natural disaster.

Moreover, according to Greenhough, Jazeel and Massey (2005:369) this specific event brought into uneasy and troubling focus some of the tensions between interdependent

¹ In response to the tsunami, the UN General Assembly requested Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy to help sustain global political will in the recovery effort. In February 2005 UN announced the appointment of former United States President Clinton as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. More info and statistical data available at <http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org>.

² See Alertnet Reuters Foundation website, available at <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/aidtracker/>

categories that not only lie at the core the geography: nature and culture; environment, society and development; global interconnection, humanitarianism and the politics of aid; ethics, care and responsibility; knowledge, expertise and empowerment.

Beyond the human toll, the tsunami provided a pretext for evictions, land grabs, unjustifiable land-acquisition plans and other measures designed to prevent displaced and homeless from returning to their original homes and lands (Leckie, 2005:15) and in a way hampered the fragile peace process especially in North-East provinces.

Almost one year after of the event, a closer look on recovery phase seems show repetition of the same no sense done in other *Aidlands* in the recent past. Sri Lanka, has sought most dramatically to re-shape its residential landscape through the reconstruction process base on a massive shelter and housing delivery and a great competition of International Aid actors which confirm what Shalmali Guttal, says: “*Now we have sophisticated colonialism, and they call it reconstruction*” (Klein, 2005).

As Clark (2005:386) argued, the tsunami was a “*generative event*”, creating new spatialities and temporalities. The aid flow shaped different spaces: no-reconstruction zones, new-relocation sites, townships, uniqueness of geographical place and personal circumstances were spatialised across the region. The tsunami has brought temporal challenges in and through space. There was a sense in which the clock was zeroed or reset opening a tsunami “*era*” and calling for an immediate “*post*” with all the psycho-social meaning of the “*tsunami remembering*”. The new era the post-tsunami opened a new time-frame define by two extremes: the aftermath of the disaster and the aftermath of relocation or in other words: the loss of home and the repossession of new-home.

Thus the relevance of the narrative and the analysis of housing approaches adopted in this specific “*complex environment*”, and the subsequent conceptual deconstruction of those temporalities and spatialities might be useful to better forge a re-conceptualisation - and its subsequent mode of action – of the linkages between emergency and development. The paper demonstrates how fundamental donor-driven mistakes of earlier recovery programmes are being repeated on a massive scale commensurate with the scope of international intervention. In a landscape dense of top-down policies, multiplicity of actors/donors and uncertain temporalities, the paper utilise the case study of Sri Lanka as powerful symbol of the *Aidland* and icon of the gap between emergency shelter and durable housing. Most displaced persons now have been resettled in villages and new urbanities: outcomes that superimpose a new “*tsunami geography*” on an already vulnerable “*conflict-based geography*”.

High levels of housing damage, s-proportionate shelter intervention

On 26th December 2004 the tsunami wave damaged two thirds of the coastal strip: almost 200,000 houses spread over 1,000 kilometres of coast were destroyed, as were 1,615 kilometres of roads and 155 kilometres of railway lines. Out of 25 districts comprising the island, 12 were affected. Around 30,000 people died and there were almost a million of IDPs generated. The provinces which were worst affected are those on the North East coast where the houses were largely self built. Apart from the coastal communities already being comparatively poor in the Sri Lankan context, the tsunami has compounded previously existing vulnerabilities mainly in the North East³.

³ The percentage of the coastal population affected ranges from an estimated 35% in Kilinochi to 80% in Mullaitivu and 78% in Ampara coastal district divisions compared to the southern districts of Galle, Matara, and Hambantota with less than 20% of the coastal population affected, albeit with scattered pockets of severe damage. According to the World Bank (ADB, 2005:3).

Partly as a result of intense media attention, within two days of the tsunami striking Sri Lanka's coastline, International humanitarian organisations had started to arrive in the island "en masse". Several hundreds or better thousands of NGOs and private individuals have descended on Sri Lanka with budgets of various dimensions and involving projects of varying time frames⁴. Well resourced agencies and very small ones, competent and incompetent, well-prepared and unprepared, secular and faith-based, reputable and disreputable, household names and unknown, ambitious and humble, opportunistic and committed, governmental and nongovernmental, national and international, bilateral and multilateral, well-established and just formed.

The vastly expanded number of players was a major challenge in the first period of the intervention for the Governments' emergency coordinating unit, the Centre for National Operations (CNO)⁵. In the field, there were unaccounted aid agencies, many of whom were distributing goods, services and cash in the affected areas without any comprehension of their impact on local dynamics, how they related to actual needs or whether they were duplicating of the work of other agencies (Harris, 2005:2). Moreover, the tsunami did not just create the conditions for a plethora of new international actors to engage in Sri Lanka, but also provided the catalyst for hundreds of local NGO's and informal groups to emerge and "getting bigger". Different local NGOs, with experience mainly in development and advocacy, were approached by different international "newcomers" with offers of funding, "partnerships" or competent local staff (mainly engineers and English speakers). The practice of partnership in the post tsunami, for many newcomers, serves only as a sophisticated mechanism to legitimise the predefined agendas of the aid agencies, NGOs and/or governments (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Despite the "aid invasion" and the creation of an *Aidland*, the response moved rapidly from lifesaving search and rescue and first aid to protecting and recovery.

The big amount of destroyed houses (approximately 100,000 houses according RADA⁶ (2005) and almost 800,000 displaced all over the affected areas, has been the two major characteristics of the disaster along with the fact that, in December 2005, 352,000 were already displaced by the conflict⁷ (IDP Project, 2006). Thus, the big amount of emergency aid dropped in the island was channelled through the powerful symbol of "protection spaces" and temporary camps.

Due to the elevate rate of destruction and displacement, shelter needs were very high and most organisations have decided to work in this sector not only because their expertise (e.g. Oxfam), but also because attracted by the high visibility of "sheltering" for media and

⁴ In the initial aftermath of the tsunami was quite impossible taking count of the different actors involved. Coordination meetings that happened in January and February 2005 saw the participation of hundreds of individuals in each session. Anyhow, by the end of the first month there were an estimated 300 new INGO's operating in Sri Lanka, representing a four-fold increase over the pre-tsunami numbers (Harris, 2006:2). Moreover, at the time of writing latest update of the CHA-JICA NGO desk database, record a total of 615 NGOs registered. For details see <http://www.ngojica-sl.org/NGODirectoryArchive.php>

⁵ CNO was established on the 29th of December 2004, in order to coordinate the rescue and relief operations in a cohesive and an efficient manner. The mandate of CNO was to monitor and coordinate all initiatives taken by government ministries, agencies and other institutions relating to post-tsunami relief efforts.

⁶ In march 2006 TAFREN has been replaced by the Reconstruction and Development Authority (RADA) aiming to be the "single Government focal point responsible for reconstruction and development activities to all natural and man made disasters in post tsunami and post conflict areas throughout the nation".

⁷ Of the displaced, 72,800 were living in welfare centres, with the majority hosted in the district of Puttalam. The rest were living with families and friends, still unable, or unwilling, to return to their original homes (CARE, et.al., 2005:2). The combined displacement caused by the conflict and the tsunami resulted in a total of more than 900,000 displaced persons in a country with about 18 million inhabitants.

donors⁸. On 7th of January there were spread all over the affected areas more than 597 welfare centres, in temples, schools and in “*emergency shelters*”.

It was recognised early on that such accommodation would only provide a very temporary solution, and at the same time reconstruction would take several years; consequently transitional shelter was required to bridge the gap between emergency accommodation and a durable solution. Therefore, transitional shelters⁹ were required to bridge the gap between emergency accommodation and permanent housing. UNHCR was asked to build a country strategy for shelter using an interesting word of semi-permanent shelter and to coordinate the shelter sector providing minimum standards in order to render quality of temporary shelters uniform and in a way bypassing the differences of shelter technologies used from different actors. Almost 100 organisations have contributed to constructing more than 50,000 shelters¹⁰ with different level of shelter expertise. Every single organization was involved “*delivered*” shelters in different shape, format and quality, with small respect of standards despite international well-acknowledge guidelines, and coordination efforts (Sphere Project, 2004) according to their donors, availability of money and expertise. Transitional shelter projects were implemented both on the original land of the owners if out of the buffer zone or in land allocated by the government¹¹.

As fieldwork evidences provide, the initial phase was very competitive: “*everybody was in pressure to ‘sell’ shelter in any shelter meeting in order to spend the money received from donation as soon as possible*”. This (s)proportionate shelter intervention dramatically re-shapes the residential landscape with an already seen “*quick fix*” attitude. Most displaced persons have been resettled in tent villages pending permanent resettlement: at the time of writing, almost 7,150 people live in 42 transitional shelter camps¹². Some families have chosen to stay in camps until their permanent housing is complete. This process has for the most part gone forward with minimal consultation with affected persons regarding the sites and available choices.

⁸ Thus in Ampara District, more than 46 “*shelter agencies*” were operating assisting almost 100.000 displaced families (UNHCR, 2005:14).

⁹ According to the UNHCR (2005a:6) definition, in Sri Lanka transitional shelter was a construction which “... *provides a habitable covered living space and a secure, healthy living environment, with privacy and dignity, to those within it, during the period between a conflict or a natural disaster and the achievement of a durable shelter solution*”. The conceptual bases of those developments were attached to the concept of “adequate shelter” as provided by UN-HABITAT(1996:22): “*adequate shelter means more than a roof over one’s head. It also means adequate privacy, adequate space, physical accessibility, adequate security, structural stability and durability; adequate lighting, heating, ventilation; adequate basic infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation, suitable environmental quality and health related factors; adequate and accessible location with regard to work and basic facilities: all of which should be available at an affordable cost*”.

¹⁰ Final figures are still being analysed by UNHCR, but initial figures indicate that approximately 15% of shelters are being provided by UN family agencies (UNHCR, IOM, ICRC); local NGOs (Sevelanka, Caritas, ZOA) have each constructed more than 3,000 shelters contributing a further 20-25%; about a dozen INGOs (including biggest: GOAL, Oxfam, World Vision) have built between 1,000-2,000 each contributing a further 25-30%, mostly working through local NGOs as implementing partners. The remainder have been provided by a combination of local NGOs, private donors, political parties, or local authorities. All data comes from <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/coordination/sectoral/shelter/index.asp>

¹¹ According to the Project Director of the TAP when transitional shelters are built on crown/state land there is no problem because the state will not evict the IDPs. However, he states that the norm is to have an agreement covering a period of at least 18 months. (UNHCR, 2005:1).

¹² However, as of February 2006, 78 transitional shelters were still under construction in Batticaloa, with 22 families staying with relatives and 4 families still remaining in the Paddy Marketing Board premises (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2006:12).

At the end-May 2005 a total of 26,755 shelters have been constructed, with a further 9,211 shelters in progress. Subsequently, almost six months after the disaster was recognised by many actors that there was a need to upgrade some shelters which TAP and others had identified as being sub-standard (Da Silva, 2005:9). Thus, in June UNHCR starts a shelter upgrading programme (UNHCR, 2005:2) to rectify sub-standard shelters¹³.

Despite experiences in other natural disasters, there has been no emphasis on the fact that building permanent housing and resettle communities may take some time, up to eight months or years, due to problems with identifying suitable land, and that therefore these settlements should be equipped with the basic facilities that would enable people to live in them with some dignity over a reasonable length of time. While some agencies that took on the task of building have constructed sturdy structures with adequate space between houses, provision for a community gathering place, and with toilets located some distance away from the living quarters others have erected structures that are cramped, with no consideration for dynamics of human-social interaction with such a settlement. These very visible disparities result in tensions among displaced communities.

As noted by Philips (2005:2) in early 2005, “*temporary housing was likely to be an issue for sometime given the extent of the permanent housing that has to be provided*”. The tsunami destroyed close to 13% of the housing stock in the affected areas. Nationally, there are an estimated 4,6 million dwelling units, 29% of which are considered “*temporary*” (built with non-durable materials). It is reasonable to estimate that Sri Lanka requires over 200,000 new housing units, or 5% of the national housing stock, “*a demand that cannot be easily met in a short period of time*” (Philips, 2005:2).

Transitional shelters and Transitional camps remain for almost a year and a half a powerful symbol of the big international intervention and an icon of the gap between emergency shelter and durable housing. An icon able to show the hybrid logic of “*tents in concrete*” (Skotte, 2005) which is neither a short emergency, nor is a permanent solution, just a urgent call for getting a gift house, a huts, a shelter with the absence of any standard-setting with regard to provision of minimum facilities in the temporary resettlement sites and on shelter quality. In some areas the transitional houses have been built entirely of tin sheets. In others, the walls are of wood, or of coconut thatch, and the roofs of tin. In some cases, a natural fiber-based roofing sheet has been used, which is less hot than the tin but liable to “*melt*” during the rains, which result in a continuing cycle of ad hoc localized responses and disparities in “*distribution*”.

The land issue a costal reshaping opportunity

In the aftermath of the disaster, the GoSL, was extraordinarily prompt in announcing radical reform of the manner in which the country's coast was to be managed. Issue that has posed major obstacles to IDPs return and repossession of coastal properties: the buffer zone.

¹³ Shelters were sub-standard for a variety of reasons. A significant number of implementing partners, especially private donors, political parties, and local NGOs, have not participated fully in the co-ordination process, and were therefore unaware of the standards that had been agreed despite the burden of coordination and the great amount of communications. Some NGOs made a decision to provide large numbers quickly to get people out of tents, often with limited beneficiary consultation and reference to standards. Others were simply poorly designed and constructed, due to lack of skills and expertise in the sector, exacerbated by the geographical spread of IDPs.

Following the tsunami, the GoSL imposed a buffer zone or vulnerability zone¹⁴ in which any new construction or reconstruction was prohibited, except, as expressed in the law, for “port structures, historical monuments and tourist centres” which shall be decided “on a case-by-case basis” (TAFREN, 2005a).

At early February 2005, the time of the first filed work, the buffer zone was 500 meters all along the coast and was progressively reduced down to 100 metres on the South-West and 200 metres on the North-East coasts: this policy added confusion to the confusion, creating uncertainty as to where residents within the zone would be relocated and what would happen to the land they were occupying in the zone when the tsunami struck. Concerns were expressed by some groups that this was a pretext to move poor people and small enterprises out of the coastline and to move in big business interests such as major tourism operators who would take control and possession of the coast (INFORM, 2005; Leckie, 2005:16).

Existing undamaged structures within the 100/200m zone will be allowed to remain and be inhabited, although the entire affected zone will be a no-build area. In addition, hotels and other businesses will remain within the buffer zone, although some building restrictions will apply for new ventures. The Urban Development Authority (UDA) has demarcated both the 100m and 200m zones along roughly 1,000 km of Sri Lanka’s coastline. The area between these markers and the shoreline will constitute the exclusion zone where people displaced by the tsunami will not be allowed either to rebuild their damaged or destroyed homes or to return to live on the land they occupied on 25 December – whatever legal rights they may have to do so (Rice, 2005).

For some authors, (Leckie, 2005:16; COHRE, 2005; Oxfam, 2005:7) the buffer zone policy provided a pretext for evictions, land grabs, unjustifiable land-acquisition plans and other measures designed to prevent homeless residents from returning to their original homes and lands. On the contrary, the GoSL, explained that the buffer zone was necessary to protect residential areas from natural disasters. All the citizens who prior to the tsunami lived in the buffer zone must be moved elsewhere.

Thus, if people owned the property they will retain such ownership, but will not be able rebuild houses or live there. Those whose properties were affected outside the buffer zone will be provided financial assistance to rebuild on the same land, provided they owned the land (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005:5). This has caused a sense of grievance amongst those outside the buffer zone who cannot show ownership, since they cannot obtain assistance to rebuild on a par with house-owners. The feeling of discrimination is aggravated by the fact that the assistance policy for those within the buffer zone does not differentiate according to whether the damaged property was owned by the occupier or not¹⁵. Within the buffer zone unauthorised occupiers (which include squatters and encroachers) were entitled to a new house on an equal footing with house owners.

The GoSL promised families of the IDPs who previously lived within the buffer zone that they would be relocated to publicly owned areas on which housing would be reconstructed. The government promised each household a parcel of land between 6 and 15 perch¹⁶.

¹⁴ As noted by Oxfam (2005:6) in Sri Lanka, no-building zones existed before the tsunami, as part of plans to protect coastal environments: thus some of the devastated communities were, technically, situated illegally. Though the idea of a buffer zone clearly makes some sense, especially in these cyclone-prone areas, the land involved was home to many hundreds of thousands of people, and the natural habitat of communities who make their living from the sea.

¹⁵ According to data collected by the Department of Census and Statistics only about 70% of the houses damaged by the tsunami were owned by the occupiers. The rest were rented or leased, fell within coastal reservation zones, or were occupied on some other unidentified basis (Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005:5).

¹⁶ Between 150 and a little less than 400 sqm.

Moreover, in this compensatory approach major delays and uncertainties were posed by the problem of identifying available land for transitional shelter and permanent resettlement purposes. The land identification problem was greater in the eastern part of the island. This part is a long and a narrowed coastal region, which falls in dry climatic zone. Coastal fishing and rain-fed rice cultivation dominates the economic activities of the region. Population is thinly distributed with an average population density about 98 per sqkm (compared with the average of 226 for Sri Lanka recorded at the census of 1981). Moreover, the two different distinct ethnic communities Muslims and Tamils creating a quite peculiar and mixed geography. While these two communities live in separate concentrations, those concentrations are located one after another. In other words, a Muslim concentration is followed by Tamil concentration and vice versa. This alternate geography in addition to a structural land shortage and the ethnic sensitivity in the proximity of the coastal belt had posed serious problem in the identification of land for resettlements. Although consolidated statistics for all districts were not available, discussions with local authorities and INGOs suggest that the ratio between relocation and in situ construction is 60-40 to 50-50. In other words, around half of the families will need to be relocated and new sites found in some cases even 14 or more kilometres from traditional coastal villages. This will have a serious impact on peoples' livelihoods, especially fishing families dependent on the sea and immediate access to it (in this regard might be interesting to use the livelihood framework to criticize the actual policy of "*making fishers, farmers*"). There seems to be no general policy of locating the people from the same neighbourhood or same village in the same transitional camps, thus destroying one of the most potent "*reconstruction movements*" available: displaced planning for return (or in the worst of cases, for resettlement). People were scattered all over the place. This arrogant attitude towards the victims prevails also into the planning of the new settlements. Their size, their location, their composition seems to be arbitrary at best.

Housing schemes: "*Getting People Back into Homes*"

Under the slogan of "*Getting People Back into Homes*" the GoSL at the end of 2005, achieve that 95% of transitional shelter has been completed and funding has been pledged by donors for over 39,000 new homes. Construction has begun on 23,800 houses, and 15,000 houses were to be handed over by the first two months of 2006 and over 51,000 homeowners have received at least one instalment of a grant to rebuild their damaged houses (TAFREN, 2005a). Anyhow, the introduction of buffer zone has led to two types of housing programmes¹⁷: an owner-driven reconstruction scheme and a donor-built reconstruction scheme. The first, was focus to address the needs of those family who can rebuilt or reconstruct the house *in situ* outside the restricted area of the buffer zone, helping people whose houses were partly damaged were given 1,000\$ and those whose homes were fully damaged were entitled to receive 2,500\$¹⁸. The second approach, should address the needs of those families who were leaving inside the buffer zone and so they cannot rebuild in their own land. All affected families are entitled to a house built by a donor agency in accordance with GoSL standards. The donor will provide each new settlement with an internal infrastructure

¹⁷ According to different interviews there should be some medium term risk of tensions between communities benefiting from two different construction approaches (Owner driven, donor driven) just because, for example, the total amount of money received: i.e. US\$ 2500 cash grant for a house under the first scheme versus US\$ 8,500 for relocated house.

¹⁸ This scheme was mainly founded by ADB, World Bank and Swiss Development Cooperation.

while GoSL provides the services up to the relocation site¹⁹. The beneficiary remains the legal owner of his/her property within the buffer zone and receives a full title to the property in the resettlement site. In this way relocation sites were created, fully fledged newly constructed villages. Moreover, in the case of Ampara district, the most problematic province in terms of identification of resettlement land, land was available but very far from the displaced person's original villages, increasing problem related to sustainability of resettlements, livelihoods and transportations.

The “*pressure to rebuilt*” was mainly in contradiction with the strategy that address housing as an issue that goes beyond providing “*housing complexes*” or “*townships*”, as noted by Philips (2005:3). With the observation that housing and the economic and socio spatial network play a central role in their livelihoods, it becomes evident that along with providing shelter, enabling the revival and improving the livelihoods of the affected communities stand out as a key objective in housing. Moreover, the issue of land allocation for permanent resettlement was a key question for almost all 2005, especially in the Eastern Province. While the state authorities are identifying land owned by the state, set aside for other development projects and allocated to government agencies as well as land owned by private individuals in the tsunami-affected areas, the reality is that much of this land is situated at a distance from the beach. In several cases, government agencies have been slow to acquire land from private parties or have been reluctant to pay the market price (ActionAid, 2006:22). Those difficulties were not translated in adequate participative information sharing with affected community²⁰. Moreover, the most recent shift of GoSL policy on the reduction of the buffer zone has given rise to some uncertainty. The shrinking of the buffer zone has result in some families who were within the buffer zone now being out of it. The government’s position seems to be that such persons can opt to come either under the donor-driven or the owner-driven programme. Where houses have already been built for these people, but now they opt to rebuild where they were, beneficiaries will have to be carefully reselected for the pre-built houses²¹.

Aidland and *terra nullius*

What make the Indian Ocean tsunami so unusual and in a way paradox, was the “dual dimension” that the disaster was able to developed. This duality was mainly due to the fact hat the tsunami affected states already experiencing conflict-related displacement developing a “*new tsunami geography*” raised on an already vulnerable “*conflict based geography*”. Since the aftermath of the emergency phase, UNHCR and NGOs have urged not to address tsunami relief separate from aid to conflict IDPs. While the GoSL, as well as several donors and the EU first appeared to take the position that the two situations should be treated separately²². What seems clear is that the big amount of money, the international pressure and

¹⁹ The urbanisation of the resettlement site and the provision of services as water and electricity has caused major delays and problems.

²⁰ Many reports have argued about the fact that, mainly in eastern provinces, people had not been consulted or involved in the process of identifying suitable land for permanent housing (Oxfam, 2005; ActionAid, 2006; Telford, Cosgrave and Houghton, 2006).

²¹ Moreover, the reduction of the buffer zone has open spaces of in situ reconstruction of new houses closed to the sea in the ex-buffer zone as the case of 125 families in Pandirippu village in Kalmunai Division, who received new houses in their own land very closed to the see on the margin between the previous and the new buffer zone limes from a US Buddhist Foundation. As noted during the fieldwork, this specific case that create some tension in the area between “*who did received and should say close to the sea*” and “*who received not and should move away*”.

²² Need to be noted that in of mid-2005, some 800,000 people remained displaced, 450,000 from the natural disaster and 350,000 from the conflict (IPD Project, 2006).

the internal competition between aid actors, fuelled by a “*de-contextualization*” of aid practices and policies, has created a “*tsunami geography*” made of new spatialities, remote and unsustainable created and its subsequent related aid actions. Places fully shaped by aid policies of standards, conventional dimensions and costs, visibility plates and numbers of beneficiaries. Ordered and conventional “*social and economic engineering*” (Klein, 2005a:31) experiments. As shown many resettlements sites, housing implementation was conceived as a set of short and defined sets of actions managed directly by international actors without dealing with a complex, tense and dense “*local*”. The local complexities, both related conflict, tensions and livelihood erosion were ignored by agencies which had to be accountable to their private donors. They were under constant pressure to be effective and produce results, visible and soon as possible and win the political battle with its direct competitors. This pragmatism clearly imposes its limits on genuine participation of selected beneficiaries of housing intervention. Thus, many problems were originated from the practical, institutional set-up of the aid chain concretising what was mentioned by Long (2001:89): “*if it is true that project donors are ‘the prime movers’ in the aid chain, it is most likely that the poor will respond by adapting their needs to the supply on offer*”. Furthermore, the adaptation comes not only from the affected people, but also from the implementing partner: no space for negotiation, no space for advocacy and internal learning just implementation, direction and control: a passive project-oriented management.

The local density of project and agents which represent a localisation of a common dimension of the exogenous intervention in Sri Lanka epitomised different strategies and objectives which do not always coincide, of different actors. There were organised, professional structures, others which were flexible and amateurish. Some organisations were religious, others political, others are old and neutral. Houses were distributed as shelters: before the tsunami around 4,000 houses were built per year, and now Sri Lanka must rebuild around 160,000 houses. The country's human resources are stretched, as are the country's natural resources which are insufficient or can not be produced or extracted fast enough to keep up with construction projects. The number of carpenters, builders and expert contractors is certainly less than is required. The pre-tsunami market demanded a certain number of people employed in the sector, the new post-tsunami market demands twice as many.

In a way, the same “*emergency logic*” that appear to be happened for transitional shelters, might be transferred to permanent housing solutions as demonstrated by the fieldwork evidence. Evidence that is moreover confirmed by the fact that the ICRC at present the single largest pledging donor of permanent shelter in the country with a signed MoU to build 15,000 permanent homes for those who were displaced by the tsunami and/or living in the 100 m. coastal zone. Despite the growing awareness in the literature that resettlement might be a traumatic experience, and may have a significant negative impact on people's livelihoods and social relations experience of *ex nihilo* reconstruction has shown the tendency to bypass policy alternatives promoting a “*compulsory villagisation*”.

The slogan of the post tsunami intervention was an ambitious programme; not only do they wish to rebuild after the tsunami, but they want to “*build back better*”. They don't want to return Sri Lanka to the status quo existing before the tsunami, they want to improve it, and they don't want to restrict their actions to the emergency, but they want to seize the opportunity to create development. But creating conditions for development requires time.

Moreover, post Tsunami reconstruction policy with regard to housing for the poor who lost their homes may result in some getting a better house, while landless and squatter communities are excluded from the policy of replacing a “*house for a house*”. In the long run the policy of merely replacing assets (houses or boats), of those who had them with out

consideration of landless tsunami survivors may result in a policy that exacerbates economic inequality, with implications for social conflict: So, again *Aidland* became a *Terra nullius*.

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