1.4 Structure of the thesis

My thesis is divided into two main parts which are further divided into seven chapters. The first part comprises of the first three chapters and outlines my research interests while the second part details my empirical findings and results through the remaining four chapters.

After introducing the research topic and establishing the aim of the study in chapter one, chapter two provides a brief overview of the background of my empirical research.

This chapter is organized around three aspects: Firstly, I outline the historical development of the island presenting the socio-economic profile of the country followed by a brief documentation of the civil war.

Secondly, I provide an overview of the different kinds of migration in Sri Lanka, for example, forced and labor migration. The notion of 'refugees' and 'IDPs' in the country have also been highlighted here along with the type of national and international assistance they receive.

Thirdly, I attempt to portray the narrative history of the Sri Lankan displaced persons living in Sri Lanka as IDPs and living in India as refugees. I explain the nature of livelihood pattern they have developed while living away from their native land and even for those who returned after almost a couple of decades.

In addition, the third section discusses the post-war scenario amongst the displaced persons in both countries. In this section, I depict several changes brought about by the war in the Northern part of Sri Lanka, mainly in Jaffna. The changes have been mostly contributed to the economic, social, and cultural perspectives of the Tamils in Jaffna. Towards the end of this section, I deal with the refugees in Tamil Nadu, about their decision to return or integrate and the kind of assistance they are receiving from the Tamil Nadu Government presently. The study also portrays the DPs who are trying to migrate to Australia, illegally, in order to have a better future.

Chapter three elaborates the methodological groundings of my thesis. It outlines the research perspective in general as well as a documentation of the research process and the methods applied. The main methodological strategy is also explained. In this chapter, I start with my own experiences
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regarding access to the field. Following this part, I discuss the relevance of 'multi-sited' fieldwork that I applied in my research as I am dealing with multiple sites. Later, I continue with my research, and methods. For analysis, I have chosen different forms of qualitative methods that includes formal, informal, and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Next, I elaborate my own positioning in the field as establishing a good relationship with the respondent helps in collecting the desired material. Eventually, I talk about the 'Grounded theory' that have been used to analyze and evaluate the collected data and materials.

Moving on to the second part of my thesis, I introduce my theoretical frameworks along with the empirical findings and results to be detailed in the next four chapters.

In this direction, chapter four offers theories on 'home' and 'belonging'. I have divided this chapter into three parts: The first half provides an overview of the different theories of home along with developing my own focus on the concept of home. The second half of the chapter deals with the concept of 'belonging with' which is a combination of commonality, mutuality and attachment, with the objective of addressing the relationship and the degrees of belonging that the displaced persons have to their homes. I briefly talk about these three different dimensions of belonging that I have developed through the course of my research. Here, also I have developed my own focus on the concept of attachment and have analyzed its several dimensions. Finally, I conclude this chapter by an informed reflection on the two concepts of 'home' and 'attachment'.

In chapter five, I begin to understand my research findings based on the theoretical and analytical framework as discussed in chapter four. The main concern of this chapter is with the notion of Ur amongst the displaced persons residing in Sri Lanka and India. I have split this chapter into four sections: The first section deals with the conceptualization of home as it emerges in general in the theoretical debates and how they relate to the Tamil context. In the second part, I present the displaced persons' narratives of Ur and their families living in Colombo, Jaffna (Sri Lanka) and Tamil Nadu (India). In addition, I locate the contrasting meanings given to home by them, in regard to return, depending on factors like time, socio-economic needs and 'aspirations to the good life' (Appadurai 2004: 10). The third part reflects on the argumentation as presented by different categories of persons. I argue that elderly displaced persons in Colombo and Tamil Nadu, feel emotionally and spiritually
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attached to their original homes and through which they identify themselves. However, most of them do not intend to return because of their 'aspirations to the good life' (Appadurai 2004: 10) and a better future for their children, details of which will follow in the subsequent chapters. On the contrary, the young generations are reluctant to return to an unknown and strange place. In contrast, the displaced persons at the welfare centers in Jaffna view their home as a 'source of income' and 'identity' because of which they want to return. Besides, this section shows home as a safe and secured place which is devoid of any permanent structure. Several homes (of friends, relatives) at several places are a good substitute of having the feeling of home instead of a single one. Home to this group of people is a place where one can be happy and at ease. Home is also viewed as a prison, which is discussed in the third section. Finally, the conclusion highlights the different conceptualizations of home and relates them with regard to resettlement, integration, and return.

Chapter six evaluates and explicates how the notion of 'belonging' influences the ideas of home of the Sri Lankan displaced Tamils. It also addresses the relationship and the degrees of belonging that they have to their homes. To understand this relationship between the displaced Tamils with their original Ur and their negotiations with displacement and resettlement, I analyze the third dimension of belonging which is attachment. This provides a useful tool which I observed among the displaced persons in relation to their original homes. The meaning given to attachment to Ur in the Sri Lankan context needs to be seen in the light of how the relationship between the rural and urban lifestyle is symbolized and discussed. In this chapter, I attempt to elaborate on attachment (to Ur) from its relatively close form to its relatively weak form to which my data is linked. This is done to discuss the mutual process of formation of identity and ascribing meaning to places. Furthermore, this discussion plays a fundamental role which influences the interviewees' decisions either to return to their Ur or resettle and re-integrate in their present location.

The last chapter summarizes the findings of this dissertation along with recent political developments. This has been completed in order to understand the future possibilities and prospects for the DPs. Moreover, the gaps, which have been filled up by this thesis, will be pursued. Finally, I conclude with some suggestions for the concerned authorities with regard to the possibilities of return and resettlement of the DPs at their own Ur.