Living with the legacy of displacement: an exploration of non-return and the long-term effects of displacement on social life in Pabo, northern Uganda

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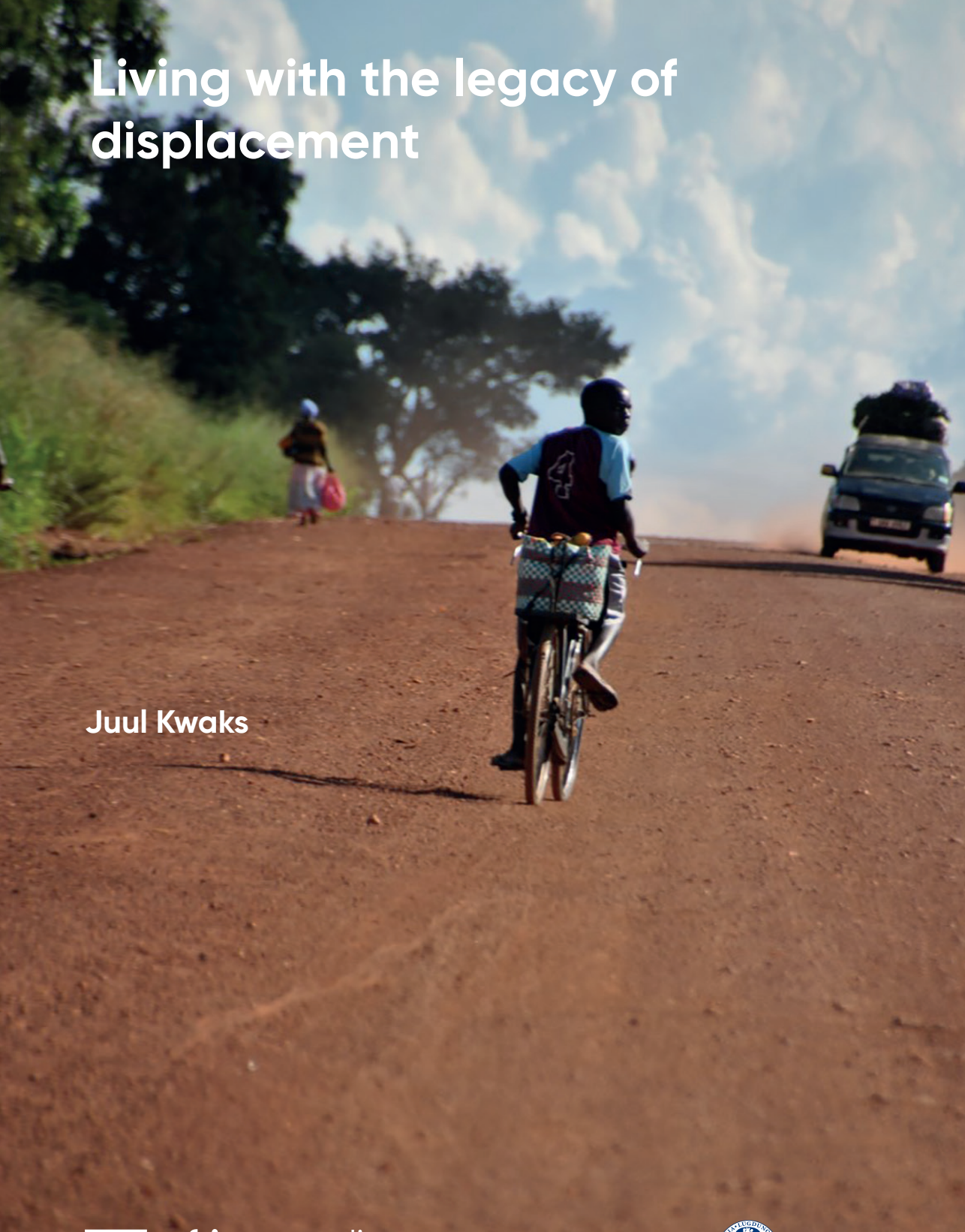

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Living with the legacy of displacement

Dedication

To all those
who are still in search of a place to call home

Living with the legacy of displacement:

An exploration of non-return and the long-term effects of displacement on social life in Pabo, northern Uganda

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Preface

Dear reader,

A few words to you, first. Thank you, *apwoyo*, for picking up this book and taking the time to read (parts of) it. What you see before you is the result of months of hard work — and months of less hard work. Of break-throughs and break-downs. It is based on a Master's thesis I completed in late-2018, which has now undergone a process of finetuning and editing. I am proud and pleased to share it with you. As a preface to this book, I want to share two things with you: one is a personal reflection, and the second is a more practical point.

In this book, I will be sharing some personal stories of people I have met in Pabo, northern Uganda, and I will be analysing them through various theoretical lenses. These stories are there for a reason: they show that we are talking about real human beings when we are writing about war and displacement. The people who feature in this book gave me permission to share their stories, thereby partly making them my stories to tell. Yet, they are not entirely my stories to tell. Presenting the stories in this way, steering or editing them as little as possible albeit still interpreted and presented by me, is a pragmatic choice, not a perfect one. In that sense, even though I speak of voicelessness of displaced individuals and attempting to work towards a better way of alleviating this, this should not be the end-point. It is within current structures of power, which have evolved over centuries, that this imperfect outcome stands. It is a call to work more towards achieving true agency and power for those who possess little – an end-point where the conversation is equal, and those who are oppressed truly speak for themselves, not through someone else.

Having said that, I want to lay out a more practical point as well. As it is my hope that different people will gather different things from this book, I have set out a bit of a roadmap. If you are most interested in the storytelling part of this book – you want to get an idea of what life was and is like for some of the people I spoke with, or you want to learn more about individual experiences of war and displacement – then the personal stories at the beginning of Chapters 5 and 6 will be most interesting to you. Additionally, it might be good to read the section 'A taste of Pabo' on pages 22 to 26 to get a feel of the physical surroundings in which this research took place. If, instead, you are interested in the policy dynamics of the topic of displacement, I would

recommend reading pages 62 to 70 of Chapter 3 and then pages 232 and 233 of the conclusion. If you are interested in how I went about collecting life histories, so the methodological nitty-gritty of this work, you may want to turn to Chapter 4, and specifically to pages 86 to 92 For the main findings of this work, you can either read the first part of the conclusion ('A summary of the findings') or you can read the main analyses that are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, right after the personal stories that open each of the chapters.

These are just some of the directions I can imagine you might want to take, but there are many more ways of reading this book. Have a look at the Table of Contents and use the (sub)headers to get an idea of what can be found where. And, of course, if you want to get the full picture: read this book from cover to cover! You have my gratitude either way.

Voorwoord

Beste lezer,

Allereerst richt ik een paar woorden aan jou. Dankjewel, *apwoyo*, dat je dit boek in handen hebt genomen en tijd hebt gemaakt om het (gedeeltelijk) te lezen. Wat je voor je hebt liggen is het resultaat van maanden hard werk – en maanden minder hard werk. Van doorbraken en verscheidene minicrises. Het is gebaseerd op een masterscriptie die ik eind 2018 heb afgerond en waar inmiddels een proces van bijschaven en editen aan te pas is gekomen. Behalve dit voorwoord en de samenvatting is het hele boek helaas in het Engels. Dit doet meer recht aan de context waarin het onderzoek gedaan is, maar heeft voor sommigen ook het nadeel dat het niet altijd te volgen is – zeker met al dat academisch jargon. Toch ben ik blij dit boek te presenteren en hoop ik dat je er wat mooie dingen uit kunt halen. Voordat je begint met lezen, zijn er twee dingen die ik graag met je wil delen: één ervan is een persoonlijke reflectie en het tweede is van praktische aard.

In dit boek deel ik een aantal persoonlijke verhalen van mensen die ik in Pabo, Noord-Oeganda, heb leren kennen. Vervolgens gebruik ik verschillende theoretische kaders om deze verhalen te analyseren. Deze verhalen zijn er niet voor niets: ze laten zien dat we het hebben over echte mensen wanneer we spreken over oorlog en ontheemding. De mensen die een grote rol spelen in dit boek hebben me toestemming gegeven om hun verhalen te delen, waarmee het gedeeltelijk mijn verhalen zijn geworden om te vertellen. Maar toch is dat niet helemaal zo. Door de levensverhalen op deze manier te presenteren – door ze zo min mogelijk te bewerken of een bepaalde richting in te sturen – is een pragmatische keuze gemaakt, maar zeker geen perfecte. Ondanks dat ik spreek over het gebrek aan een stem voor mensen die ontheemd zijn geraakt en over manieren waarop dit verbeterd kan worden, is dit werk geen eindpunt en zou het dat ook niet moeten zijn. Het is te midden van de huidige machtsstructuren – machtsstructuren die in de loop der eeuwen tot stand zijn gekomen – dat ik deze imperfecte uitkomst presenteer. Het is een oproep om ons verder in te zetten om daadwerkelijk een stem en zelfbeschikking te realiseren voor hen die dat ontberen – om te werken richting een punt waarin gelijkwaardige gesprekken gevoerd worden en mensen uit alle delen van de wereld en lagen van de bevolking toegang hebben tot kanalen om voor zichzelf te spreken, niet via iemand anders.

Dat gezegd hebbende, is er ook nog een pragmatisch punt dat ik naar voren wil brengen. Aangezien verschillende lezers verschillende interesses hebben, stel ik een routekaart voor. Indien je meer geïnteresseerd bent in het verhalende, minder technische deel van dit boek – je wilt bijvoorbeeld een idee krijgen van hoe het leven van de mensen die ik heb gesproken eruit ziet of zag – raad ik aan om de persoonlijke verhalen te lezen aan het begin van Hoofdstukken 5 en 6. Daarbij beveel ik '*A taste of Pabo*' op pagina's 22 tot en met 26 aan, aangezien dit een goed beeld schetst van de omgeving waarin dit onderzoek heeft plaatsgevonden. Als je daarentegen meer geïnteresseerd bent in het beleid met betrekking tot vluchtelingen en mensen die ontheemd zijn geraakt in eigen land, beveel ik pagina's 62 tot en met 70 van Hoofdstuk 3 aan en pagina's 232 en 233 van de conclusie. Mocht je graag willen weten hoe ik de verhalen die dit boek ondersteunen verzameld heb, dan kun je de methodologie in Hoofdstuk 4 raadplegen en met name pagina's 86 tot en met 92. Voor een samenvatting van de bevindingen van dit boek kun je ofwel het eerste deel van de conclusie lezen ('*A summary of the findings*') of, als je meer tijd hebt en meer diepgang zoekt, de analyses in Hoofdstukken 5 en 6. Deze analyses volgen steeds direct op de persoonlijke verhalen die aan het begin van het hoofdstuk te vinden zijn.

Dit zijn slechts enkele van de vele manieren waarop je dit boek kunt lezen. Je kunt ook een kijkje nemen in de inhoudsopgave of gebruik maken van de kopjes om een idee te krijgen van wat waar te vinden valt. En, uiteraard, als je een volledig beeld wilt krijgen, lees dan het boek van begin tot eind! Wat je ook kiest, ik ben je dankbaar.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the people in Pabo who made time to speak with me. You allowed me a glimpse into your lives and taught me so much. You are tenacious and resilient, and this has been an inspiration. I have taken in every word you have said, and taken all your stories to heart – you have changed me in ways I could not begin to imagine before going. Specifically, I would like to thank Samuel. Your work as my translator and opener of doors was incredibly helpful. But you became so much more than a colleague; you became my friend and one of the people who made me feel at home in this completely new context. You are a smart, kind, and compassionate man, and I am sure you will accomplish great things. I wish you and your family all the best, and I hope we will continue to connect in the future. Apwoyo matek!

Closer to home, I would like to thank Klaas van Walraven and Han van Dijk for their work as my supervisors. Klaas, without you this book would not have taken the shape it has now. Thank you for thinking through the material with me, for diligently correcting my writing, and for taking so much time to give me advice. But most of all I want to thank you for your unwavering support – even after the completion of the thesis and this book. You believed in me and encouraged me to move beyond categories and to develop my own writing style in order to make this work more accessible and especially more beautiful. Han, thank you, too, for your support and your critical advice. You know the Ugandan context and have been able to place my findings in perspective. Your concrete support in connecting me with Mbarara University and your visit in Gulu were both so valuable.

At home-home, I want to thank my family. Mom and dad, you are amazing. Thank you for supporting me throughout my many years of studying – both financially and emotionally. It meant the world to me that you visited me in Uganda, and it was my great pleasure to show you what I was doing and to introduce you to some of my interviewees as well as to new friends. Mom, I know that this trip was not always easy for you – getting stuck with Bella and being rescued by prisoners in yellow overalls comes to mind – which makes it even more valuable that you came. I hope you can now look back with enjoyment and realize that you conquered your fears. Mama, thank you for everything. Thank you for standing by me and always believing in me, for making me a stronger woman by encouraging me to pursue the things I

want, and for telling me when to stop being a perfectionist, because enough is enough. Papa, you, too, have always believed in me and supported me. I know I can always lean on you. Your sober view of things and unwavering belief that everything will be alright never cease to provide me comfort. Thank you for all of that. Then, my two badass brothers. Bob and Kees, you two always make me laugh and feel at home. I know you will always have my back, and I hope you know I will always have yours. I love all of you and hope this publication makes you proud.

As I was writing the original thesis that preceded this book, I realized that I was lucky enough to have two homes. In Delft, in Villa 67, het Buurthuis, de Inrichting, de JvB, or simply 'home', I have many people to thank. Living with 15 roommates was not always easy, but I enjoyed it so much. If it weren't for you, the thesis-writing days would have been so much less bearable. You made me laugh when I was feeling down, encouraged me, offered help, and always made time for a beer or boardgames. Even though life has brought us to different places, the people I have lived with in Delft over the years will always constitute a part of home.

Looking back, I especially want to thank Tirza and Stan for their help with the initial thesis. Tirza's amazing design skills helped give shape to the original thesis, and Stan's Photoshop skills provided the maps that were then used. Even though the book is a bit different, this publication would not have happened without you. Adding to this, I have another former Industrial Design-student to thank. Thank you, Philip (aka Stefan), for the beautiful illustrations you have made for this book! Your endless enthusiasm has led to a beautiful addition that makes the stories come alive. Even though there are many more people from Delft to thank, I would like to specifically thank Umit. Thank you, Umit, for reading through some of these chapters, providing feedback, and thinking through some of the dilemmas with me. Moreover, thank you for the hours and hours of hanging out, drinking beer, laughing, and talking. You pulled me through back then, and continue to be a source of energy. I am glad our friendship is outliving your four-year-benchmark.

It is also here that I would like to take the time to thank some more of the amazing, smart, powerful women in my life. Noor, you are my life-long best friend. Thank you for your friendship, your humour, your never-ending encouragement and advice. Your feedback on parts of this thesis was incredibly helpful, and talking to you about the topic throughout the process was a way of ordering my thoughts. Your visit to Uganda was at times irresponsible, but priceless nevertheless. Thank you for being the person I

can tell everything to – you are my safe place. Then, Mira, Theresa, and Jana. You girls are the best thing that happened to me in Maastricht. You are all so kind, loving, smart, and sassy. Our Skype dates are the best, and should be a tradition forever. You inspire me.

In the same line of incredible women are the two blonde babes that were my roommates in Gulu. First, for a little while, Marie-Claire, and subsequently Wibke. Marie, you are the one who made me feel at home in Uganda for the first time. If it weren't for you inviting me to stay with you in Lira for a few days before starting my work in Gulu, I don't think I would have enjoyed the fieldwork so much. You are smart, resourceful, and caring. I couldn't be surer that you will accomplish great things. Wibke. I could not have wished for a better roommate in Gulu. I miss our wine (or Nile) nights on the porch and dancing at BJz. I miss your hilarious conversations with Opie, where you would just gesture to each other and yell about the weather. Thank you for being my friend, for having my back, and for sharing your critical thoughts on the world of NGOs and the situation in northern Uganda. As a more recent addition to the crew of blond-babe-roommates, another deserves mention. Thank you, Maaike/YG, for your support, understanding of my indecisiveness, and all the bubbles. You are more than a roommate; you are a true friend. Girls, I love all of you and am so grateful to have you in my life.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the institutional support I have been given. I would like to thank Leiden University and specifically the African Studies Centre Leiden for providing all the necessary facilities. Especially the ASCL Library has an amazing collection and has been a source of inspiration. Additionally, this research would not have been possible without the financial support I received through the Uhlenbeck scholarship. In creation of this book, the ASCL has further supported me by connecting me to the creator of the maps: Nel de Vink and the careful editor of this book: Anna Yeadell. Thank you both. In Uganda, I would like to thank Mbarara University for taking me on as a research intern and for providing the necessary institutional support. Specifically, I would also like to thank Dr Viola Nyakato from Mbarara University for meeting with me and giving me advice. Last but definitely not least, I would like to thank the Africa Thesis Award committee for nominating me for the second place in their competition. This nomination was the catalyst that led to the current publication of this book. Thank you, Harry Wels, Machteld Oosterkamp and Mieke Zwart, for facilitating this process and making this dream a reality.

I alone am answerable for the representation of stories, interpretations, and potential mistakes in this publication. Yet, I am incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to the process as well as the final result. Thank you all.

Abstract

War ravaged northern Uganda for over two decades after its start in 1986. During this time, over 80 per cent of the Acholi population living there was internally displaced. This occurrence has disrupted social life in more ways than often acknowledged in policymaking and discourse surrounding displacement. This book draws focus on the personal experiences of people who moved to Pabo – the former site of one of the displacement camps – during the war, and who have not left this place since. Using data from life histories collected in Pabo during seven months of fieldwork, it explores motivations for non-return and shows that displacement is more than a forced move from one geographical location to another; it involves economic, social, and cosmological considerations and touches upon identity and belonging. This book also explores the long-term effects of displacement on life by zooming in on social relations within the household. Using the concept of anomie, it is argued that, in this particular post-conflict context, social guidance on desirable goals and accepted behaviour is diminished and there is a discrepancy between goals that are still valued and the means available to achieve them. Building upon the life histories, the argument is constructed that the situation of anomie has contributed to intergenerational friction and to families breaking up. The goal of this book is to lay bare the interface between structure and agency, and to counter the trend of turning internally displaced people as well as refugees into abbreviations and subjects without a voice.

Samenvatting

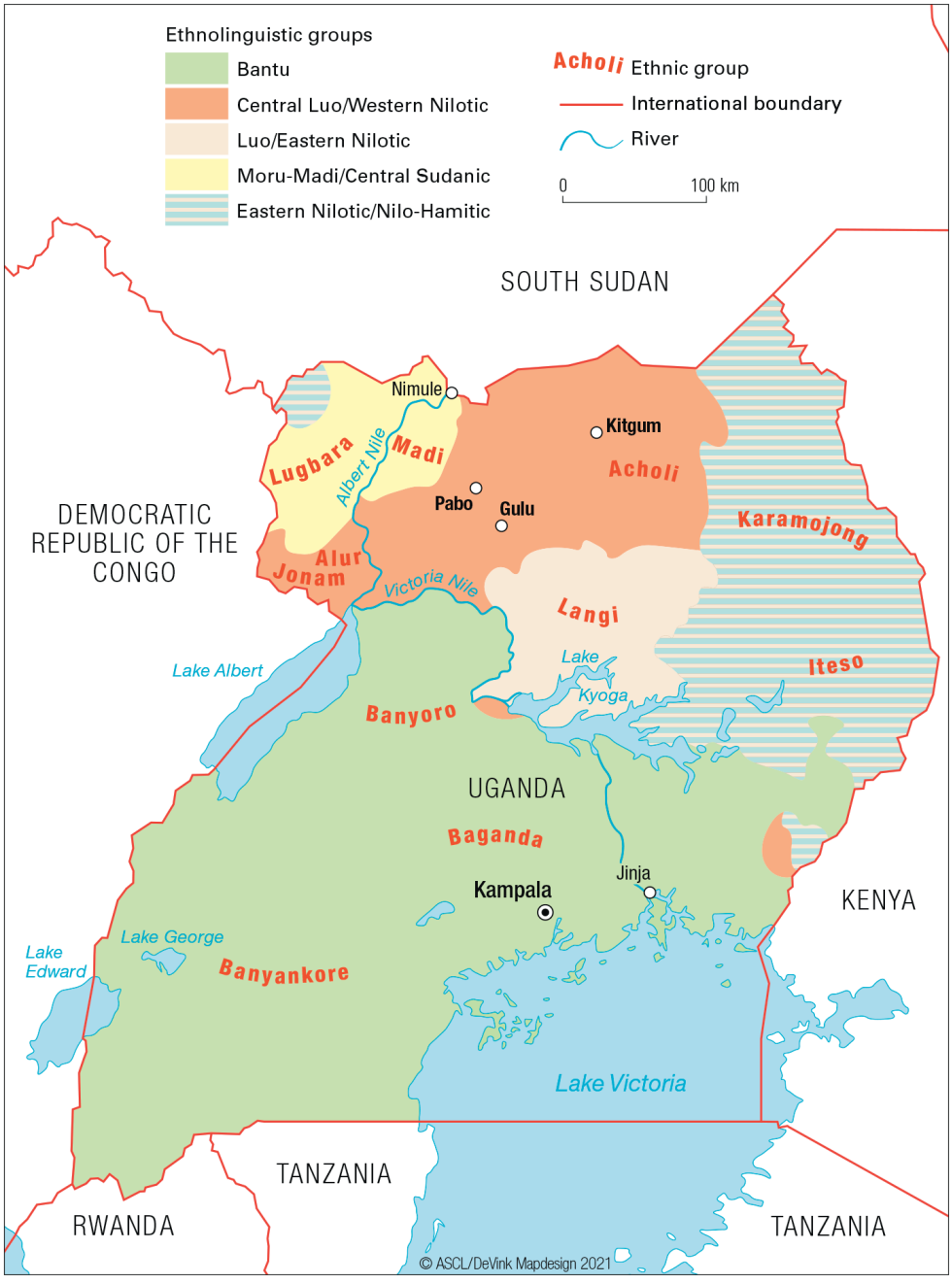
Meer dan twee decennia lang is het noorden van Oeganda geteisterd door de oorlog die daar in 1986 begon. In deze periode raakte meer dan 80 procent van de Acholi-bevolking in deze regio ontheemd. Ondanks dat dit niet altijd erkend wordt in het beleid en de discussies omtrent ontheemding, laat dit werk zien dat deze gebeurtenis het sociale leven in vele opzichten heeft ontwricht. Dit boek vraagt aandacht voor de persoonlijke ervaringen van mensen die naar Pabo – de locatie van één van de vele voormalige vluchtelingenkampen – zijn getrokken tijdens de oorlog en die hier niet meer weg zijn gegaan. Door middel van tijdens veldwerk verzamelde levensverhalen worden motivaties om niet terug te keren blootgelegd. Dit laat zien dat ontheemding meer is dan een gedwongen geografische verplaatsing; ontheemding betreft economische, sociale en kosmologische overwegingen en raakt aan identiteit en een gevoel van verbondenheid. Hiernaast onderzoekt dit boek de langetermijneffecten van ontheemding door in te zoomen op de sociale relaties binnen huishoudens. Door het concept 'anomie' te gebruiken, wordt beargumenteerd dat er, in deze specifieke context, een verzwakt sociaal kader is wat betreft levensdoelen die nagestreefd zouden moeten worden en wat acceptabel gedrag is om deze doelen te verwezenlijken. Bovendien laat het zien dat er een gat is ontstaan tussen doelen die worden gezien als belangrijk en de middelen die beschikbaar zijn om deze doelen te behalen. De levensverhalen tonen aan dat deze situatie van anomie heeft geleid tot intergenerationele wrijving en tot het uiteenvallen van families. Dit boek legt het spanningsveld tussen structuur en zelfbeschikking bloot, en gaat in tegen de trend die vluchtelingen maakt tot nummers of mensen zonder stem.

Acronyms

BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method
CAR	Central African Republic
CHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDMC	International Displacement Monitoring Center
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LC	Local Council (Leader)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRM/A	National Resistance Movement / Army
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PBC	Peace Building Commission
PRDP	Peace, Recover, and Development Plan for Northern Uganda
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army
UCDP (GED)	Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Georeferenced Event Dataset)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPDA	Uganda People's Democratic Army
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

Map 1

Map Uganda (districts)



Map 2

Ethnographic map Uganda

Drawing 1
Lawrence

1 Introduction

'Ah! You have come to greet me!,' I heard, emerging from behind a stack of bricks. It was Okot Lawrence,[1] the old market guard, who had been preparing some food in his 'kitchen'. As he appeared from behind the pile, he smiled a toothless grin and stretched out his hands to hold mine. 'You are very welcome,' he said while putting down a plastic chair that had only three legs, the fourth one replaced by a stick tied to the chair with a rubber band. Samuel, my friend and translator, was warmly welcomed as well and offered a small stool to sit on. I smiled and thanked Lawrence for hosting us at his home. As I carefully sat down – praying that the chair wouldn't break – Lawrence immediately started telling us about his day and God and his daughter and work and his dog and who knows what else. Samuel giggled and shot me a look; on our way here we had just joked about how much Lawrence liked to talk.

Even though it was sometimes hard to keep up with everything that he was saying, Lawrence was still one of my favorite people in the small town of Pabo – always smiling, always welcoming, and always making jokes in broken English, no matter how poor his situation might have been. The kindness and hospitality Lawrence displayed were actually characteristic of most of my experiences in Pabo. As Pabo is a small trading center with a turbulent past in the rural north of Uganda, there was not much material wealth to go around. But that did not keep people from sharing the little they had and from welcoming me into their homes with the kind words: '*Karibu, apwoyo*'.[2]

This book is about Pabo. Or, rather, the people of Pabo. It is about people like Lawrence – people who were forced to move to Pabo during the time of the country's civil war, when Pabo was still the site of a displacement camp, and who have not left the place since. As Uganda's civil war officially ended over a decade ago, these people have largely been forgotten. Yet, the people I have met through this research have made me painfully aware that the past is not yet (and may not ever be) fully behind us, and that there are many long-term effects of displacement. This book, then, is about more than politics and

1 All the names used in this book are pseudonyms. The pictures upon which the drawings are based were taken with permission of the person depicted.

2 'Karibu' is Swahili for 'welcome' or 'you are welcome' and 'apwoyo' is the Acholi word for 'thank you', but is also used as a greeting.

policies. Rather, it is about individual motivation, disruptive change, and the listening to and telling of stories. And every story needs a backdrop.

A taste of Pabo

This backdrop is painted mostly in green and brown – an incredible range of shades of green and brown, interrupted only by the trash scattered over the landscape, which adds little spikes of colour and a slight sense of decay. Here, the world is flat. You can see far, far into the distance, until the mountains of South Sudan cut off the green and form a bridge to the blue of the sky.

That is, as long as you are just outside of the market area. Because where Lawrence lived – and where we now start our journey – small, one-story, brick buildings are built close together and there are always people around. Lawrence had built his small rectangle house out of orange bricks and topped it with iron sheets. It was tiny and crammed with all kinds of stuff that appeared to have been gathered from any- and everywhere. So I guess he preferred to sit outside. This was better anyway because, unlike the grass-thatched roundhouses that are more common in Pabo, the iron-sheet houses are incredibly hot during the day.

From here, you can see Pabo's market – the pulsating heart of the small trading center. It is clear that the original marketplace is bursting at the seams, as multiple smaller sales areas have popped up around it. As you enter the main market, you immediately see the scar that forms a daily reminder of the trading center's past as a refugee camp: a white sign that says, 'Constructed by the Norwegian Refugee Council'. Yet, nobody seems to be bothered by this; it has faded into the everyday background and rush. Behind the sign, in the middle of the square, stalls are placed, where women sit in the shade and sell vegetables or different types of grain. Around these stalls there are more women, sitting on mats on the ground and also selling produce. On this market, you can buy the juiciest tomatoes and the biggest avocados you have ever seen. Surrounding this outside activity, small shops form the outer layer of the market. Here, non-food items are sold, ranging from pots and backpacks to colourful *kitenge*[3] and hair grease.

Just outside of the market, on the east side, there is a smaller market. Here, secondhand clothes are lying on plaids and one can browse through secondhand jewelry – often without finding two matching earrings. When

3 Thick, colourful pieces of fabric that are worn in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

you pass this area, you reach the main artery of the trading center: a two-lane, tarmacked road that traverses the trading center and that marks a place of activity, connection, and encounter. Along this road, many 'hotels' (local restaurants) have popped up that carry interesting names such as Lim pe (meaning 'no money'), *Paradise Hotel* (which, to be honest, was more of a shack with a frayed, white lace curtain for a door), or *Can deg nyeko* ('if you are poor don't be jealous'). Here, local foods such as *posho*,[4] *kalo*,[5] rice, sweet potatoes, and in a rare case *matooke*,[6] are served with a stew of beans, beef, or fish for 2 to 3,000 shillings. If you are lucky, the women working there might just serve you the fish head; the eye that stares at you from the head floating in the stew is considered a delicacy.

Aside from the local restaurants, there is also plenty of street food. For a quick snack you can pop by one of the stands that sell popcorn, fried cassava, or rolex. Especially the latter is one of my favorites; at the rolex stands, young men prepare omelets wrapped in *chapatis*[7] as you are waiting.[8] These small food stands are placed here strategically, as it is also the place where the buses from Gulu (the north's largest town, located approximately 40 kilometers to the south of Pabo) as well as buses from up-country and from neighboring South Sudan arrive and drop off people, chickens, and all kinds of luggage. As a result, this part of town is always filled with different kinds of people.

Additionally, it is also the noisiest part of town. Here, music blasts through speakers on the roadside and there is chatter all around. Young men sit behind desktops and laptops that control these speakers, and for 100 Shillings you can buy the latest hits from them. Other men work as *boda boda* drivers, transporting people around town and beyond on their motorcycles. I must admit that I had a good laugh about these men on several occasions, as they

4 Maize flour or cassava flour cooked with water until it reaches a firm dough-like consistency. It is the cheapest staple starch in the region. You eat one bite and you are full.

5 (Squishy) millet bread.

6 A starchy, savory version of the banana. This is a staple food in the southwest of Uganda but not really in the north. However, in Pabo it was sometimes imported.
A poem by the Acholi poet and writer Okot P'Bitek regarding this was at times still quoted by the Acholi to affirm the toughness of their people. P'Bitek (1996) wrote: 'Do you know / Why the knees / Of millet-eaters / Are tough? / Tougher than the knees / Of the people who drink bananas! / Where do you think / The stone powder / From the grinding stones goes? (as cited in Finnström, 2008). Some have argued that people use this to promote ethnic stereotyping – an issue that will return in the following chapter.

7 Flatbread and similar to a wrap, but with much more oil added.

8 It is rumored that the name 'rolex' is not a reference to the expensive watch brand, but is rather a corruption of 'rolled eggs.'

would wear ridiculously warm sweaters or raincoats with the hood tightly knotted over their head as soon as temperatures would drop below 25 degrees Celsius. Some of these men are pushy and annoying in their eagerness to find clientele, but most of them are nice collocutors and often try to teach me words in Acholi (the local language in this part of northern Uganda) or tell me about their family at home.

Still, however, Samuel and I would hardly ever take a *boda boda*, as everything is within walking distance – that is, if you are willing to walk for over half an hour in the burning sun while being caked in dust. But, admittedly, taking a boda boda to reach the outer skirts of the trading center is not exactly a treat either; aside from this main road, all other roads are bumpy dirt roads. So we walk. From the main road, a multitude of smaller dirt roads branch east- and westward out to where people have constructed their homes. Anywhere you walk on these roads, children are playing, and women sit outside under large mango trees, doing laundry, winnowing grain, sifting stones out of rice, cooking, making conversation, and laughing together. From here, the dirt roads meander into the distance, and the trading center slowly fades into what is referred to as 'the village' – an arbitrary distinction that is fluid and dependent upon personal viewpoints.

What you see when walking on these dirt roads is what was described in the first paragraph of this section: green and brown topped with blue. Depending on whether it rained that week or not, the grass is either green and lush or brown and dried out. Many people have constructed their homes here, alongside the dirt roads and encircled with grass. The houses are typically small and round, probably between 6 and 20m2, with the walls made of cow manure and the roof constructed out of long, strong grass. Some of the houses are painted in orange, black, and white, and most are part of a larger family compound, which is sometimes girdled by small bushes demarcating its boundaries.

During daylight hours, life in Pabo is lived outside. Yet, many people were willing to invite me into their homes and to have long conversations with me about their lives and what they had experienced. With the aforementioned kind words '*karibu, apwoyo*', doors were opened, curtains shifted aside, drinks shared, and stories unveiled. Upon entering someone's home, a completely different experience arises. Inside the roundhouses it is cool and dark, which creates an intimate setting. Most of the interiors are colourfully decorated with drapes, especially to separate the sleeping area from the rest of the

Photo 1
View of Pabo

Photo 2
Roundhouses in Pabo

Photo 3
Pabo's market

room. Additionally, many people have put up pictures of graduating children, religious posters, or posters of pop icons. Mingling with all this, is a particular smell, penetrating to an outsider, and consisting of what is probably the smell of the manure used to construct the walls, sweat, and dust. As there is no water- or electricity net to connect to, some families have a small solar panel charging in front of their house, used to connect a lightbulb at night or to charge a phone.

It was within these different homes, these diverse intimate settings, that I spent hours talking to members of Pabo's community. Even though I do not in any way claim to understand or feel it to the fullest, it was here that I got to learn about what war really means, what loss really means, and what it is like to live in a displacement camp for over a decade. It is also where I learned how strong and resilient so many people are, and how happiness and love will always be a continuing thread in human lives all over the globe. To my surprise, it was also in Pabo that I learned that I should not forget the lifestyle advice of '*mot mot*', slowly slowly. Finally, it was here that, upon our goodbyes, people prompted: 'When you go back, do not forget about us.' And I have no intention of forgetting, only of sharing – as you will find in this book.

Research question and rationale

It is in this landscape that I conducted the current research, which consisted of non-structured interviews during which I collected life histories. The interest in the topic of displacement was born out of a concern with the political, with the important questions that surround the end of a civil war, and especially the fate of the 'normal people' that have been affected by it. It is within this context that dealing with displacement is offered as a crucial concern for peacebuilding. This has resulted mostly in a call for the people who have been displaced to 'return home,' as this was considered to be a return to normalcy, peace, and stability (Chimni, 2002). The reason for this appears to be both humanitarian and related to geopolitical strategy. On the one hand, it is part of peacebuilding to indeed allow everyone in a society to return to normalcy. On the other hand, protracted displacement has come to be seen as a domestic political concern as these people might form a threat to the internal security of a state (Black & Gent, 2006; Loescher & Milner, 2005).

It was in light of these concerns that I posed the initial research question, which remains an important part of this book and at the core of what will be discussed in the first empirical chapter: Why did some people who moved to Pabo camp during the war never leave? The fact that people still remained

there seemed to indicate that there was either a 'failure' in the policy area, or that something more was going on. In light of this research question, I investigated push and pull factors, peoples' relationship to land, cosmology, and what it means to 'be home'. Additionally, as people remained at the site of their displacement, questions popped up as to when displacement can be considered to have ended.

As the research progressed, the people in Pabo made me aware that the experience of displacement was indeed not exactly in the past. As I continued to collect life histories, a wider range of topics inevitably came up, and a second broad research question emerged: What are the long-term effects of displacement on people's social relationships? This question is obviously comprehensive, one that cannot reasonably be answered in full. As such, I have chosen to focus in particular on the effect on the social relationships within the household. In the second empirical chapter, I will take on this question, and discuss the long-term effects of displacement on gender roles within marriage, masculinity, domestic violence, and intergenerational relationships.

The transition from the initial research question to the second also signifies a personal intellectual journey. I have combined my training as a political scientist with the experience of seven months of fieldwork that was ethnographic in nature. The result is an interdisciplinary work, in which the individual takes centerstage and an attempt is made to unravel some of the intricate social problems that have remained present in Pabo, even a decade after the official end of civil war.

Structure of the book

In order to give answers to the research questions posed above, the book is structured as follows. Firstly, I will introduce the case study. In this chapter, I will provide a condensed political history of northern Uganda. I focus in particular on the Acholi people who inhabit this region. Focusing on 'the' Acholi is a complicated matter; as this chapter also emphasizes, ethnicity is a fluid concept, and it is hard to determine its boundaries. Keeping this in mind, however, I look at how an Acholi ethnic identity crystallized and was articulated by its members. Additionally, I look at how several ethnic- and regional divides emerged in Uganda as a whole. From this history, I eventually arrive at the civil war that plagued the country between 1986 and 2006. Here, I focus on civilian life during conflict, and specifically civilian life in the displacement camps that were set up to receive the (largely Acholi)

displaced population. Finally, I will introduce the location that is under consideration in this book: Pabo. The history of this place as a displacement camp is highlighted, and subsequently the first voices of interviewees will be heard to give an impression of what life was like in Pabo camp.

This chapter is followed by one that focuses more on the policies, discourse, and concepts surrounding displacement. The reason why I chose to begin with the introduction of the case study rather than the theoretical framework surrounding it, is that I want the personal and the empirical to be central in this book. This book is about Pabo and its people, and even though I will analyse the collected material using various theories and concepts, I do not want to start this discussion from an abstract level. I will start this second chapter with a discussion of policies regarding internal displacement after civil war, and how this fits with the broader agenda of peacebuilding. I will then zoom in on the policy response in the case of northern Uganda. Reflecting on this discussion, I look critically at the broader discourse regarding displacement that emerges from academia, the media, and the humanitarian regime. Here, I will argue that this discourse is debilitating, as it creates a universal narrative of displacement through dehistoricization and depoliticization, which leaves refugees and internally displaced people as pure victims without a voice. From this, I will propose a broader framework that allows for contextualization and provides a way to centralize the lived experience of displaced individuals themselves. Specifically, I argue that experiences need to be placed in time; they should be properly contextualized in the context of broad historical developments as well as personal history. I also argue that the experiences should be analysed with a sensitivity to space – specifically, human attachments to various geographical locations and social spaces.

The methodology and methods that are presented in the subsequent chapter flow naturally from this proposed framework. I argue for interdisciplinarity, combining political science with ethnography and other fields of the social sciences and humanities in order to counter universalist narratives. I also introduce the methodology and methods used. I review how I went about the collection of life histories in Pabo, what challenges I encountered, and what factors influenced the collection and interpretation of the data. Overall, this chapter should provide the reader with the necessary tools to evaluate the data presented in the two empirical chapters that follow.

In Chapter 5, I explore the first research question that was posed above. This empirical chapter features the personal stories of Lucy, Samuel, James and Jane. The personal stories are followed by an analysis of factors that

contributed to people remaining in Pabo. I discuss push and pull factors that were relevant in this respect, and by looking at the interaction between structure and agency, it will become increasingly clear that there is a fine line between choosing a path in life and being forced into one. Key to this chapter is a discussion about land. I will reveal the importance of land in the Acholi context and its influence on many aspects of social and economic life. In this sense, I will look at how specific geographical locations can hold social meaning for people in northern Uganda.

The second main research question forms the focal point of empirical analysis in Chapter 6. Again, I begin this chapter with the life histories of some of the people I met in Pabo. This time, Jennifer, Francis, Susan, Charity, and Flora are introduced. In order to give some boundaries and structure to the analysis of the long-term effects of displacement on social life, I focus on households and use the sociological theory of anomie. I will introduce 'anomie,' as a concept first developed by Durkheim (1897/1951), but applicable to the context of Pabo. Throughout the chapter, I will show how anomie is present in Pabo and affects social relationships. Specifically, I will argue that the first aspect of anomie – a lack of social guidance on goals that should be desired and the means acceptable in attaining them – has an effect on intergenerational relationships. Furthermore, I will argue that a second form of anomie, in the shape of a discrepancy between internalized social goals and the means available to attain these, is also present in Pabo. I do this by focusing on the relationships between husbands and wives. Here, I show that gender roles and masculinity were affected by displacement, and that anomie is mostly present when it comes to obtaining goals of masculinity. Finally, I focus on how anomie trickles down in society and can affect families by discussing alcoholism, domestic violence, and divorce. I end the chapter by first warning that anomie is not an all-explaining theory and offering some potential additional factors. I then look at the particular experiences in this regard of former members of the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group that was active during the civil war.

In the final chapter, all these issues are wrapped up in a summary of the findings and a discussion of them in light of existing literature. Here, I will also make some suggestions for further research and have a brief look at the policy implications of the current research. Overall, this chapter will take a brief moment to reflect on the linkage between structures and agency, between politics and people.

Photo 4
Woman walking with NRM shirt

2 Introducing the case study: Ethnic identity, politics, and civil war

The aim of this chapter is to sketch the politico-historical background against which the current research took place and in light of which I suggest interpreting the findings that will be presented later in this book. In this chapter, I aim to mostly steer clear of introducing abstract concepts and analytical tools, as this is the domain of the following chapter. Yet, it should be kept in mind that the current and the following chapter are intimately linked, especially as the interpretation of and call for the tools presented in the next chapter are inspired by the current case.

I will introduce the background in three parts. These parts follow each other chronologically and also gradually zoom in from a macro-perspective to lived experience in Pabo. In the first section of this chapter, I focus on the history of the region that is currently inhabited by the Acholi people of northern Uganda. This, however, also warrants some notes on the concept of ethnicity and the collection of historical information on it. In this section, attention will be paid to precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history, leading up to the civil war that started in 1989. Throughout, it will be emphasized how several divides emerged in Ugandan society, as these also played a role in the subsequent civil war.

The second section will be devoted to the period during which the Ugandan government fought against a rebel group named the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). As the topic of this book is the effect of displacement, special attention will be paid to the situation in the displacement camps of northern Uganda. Then, in the final section, I will zoom in on Pabo: the location of the current research. In the previous chapter, I sketched a picture of life in modern-day Pabo, but here the focus will be on what life was like during the time of the camp. This is where the interviewees will already be heard, in what can best be seen as a preview and background to the two empirical chapters that are yet to come. This chapter will thus provide some necessary background

information and also plant the seeds to contextualize larger issues of violence, displacement, and peace.

A brief (political) history of the region

In this section, I focus on the history of the region that is currently inhabited by the Acholi of northern Uganda. The reason for this focus is that almost all the people I spoke with for this research identified primarily as Acholi, even though this was not a prerequisite for participation in the research. As will become clear in this section, it is not easy to speak of 'the Acholi' or 'their' history and customs. In fact, there are many ways in which what I am writing here could be misinterpreted and ways in which I can make mistakes of misrepresentation or reproduce incorrect information. Yet, I believe that it is important to consider a region's and a people's history in order to get a better understanding of their current circumstances. For these reasons, I aim to tread lightly and present a condensed socio-political history of the Acholi below.

Some notes on ethnicity and history

Before starting the effort of embedding the current research in a socio-political context, it is important to consider some critical notes. Most prominently, it has to be noted that the term 'ethnicity' has been widely debated and has become somewhat of a sensitive subject. A recurring definition, and one that, satisfyingly, at least encompasses both a hereditary and cultural component, is that an ethnic identity 'denotes a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, culture, religion[9] and ideology that stresses common ancestry' (Amone & Muura, 2014, p. 239). To this, some add social and political structures as crucial factors (see e.g. Atkinson, 1989). Of additional importance seems to be that others also recognize a group's distinctiveness (Amone & Muura, 2014).

Considering the building blocks of ethnicity, it is clear that it is constructed and always in flux. As culture, language, tradition, and cosmology are subject to change, so is ethnicity. Additionally, whereas being born into an ethnic

9 The word 'religion' is used in this quote, but I would prefer to call this 'cosmology' in the broad sense, signifying people's relationship to the natural as well as the immaterial world and the belief systems that come with this (a belief in spirits can be an example of this, but a belief in the Big Bang theory can be an example of this as well). I think cosmology is a way of responding to the question of why certain things happen.

group is the most straightforward way of identifying as a member, people (most often women) can also marry into an ethnic group and people can be adopted and socialized into a group. In a similar vein, ethnic groups can merge with other groups, cease to exist, or be newly formed. In this sense, ethnic identities come about through complex, interacting processes of adaptation and change (Atkinson, 1989), and the Acholi are just as well in an 'unfinished process of coming to be' (ibid., p. 20).

Having emphasized the non-essentialist, constructed, and everchanging nature of ethnicity, it is clear that it is a difficult endeavor to trace a people over the course of history. Current social groupings cannot simply be read into the past, and the significant changes that have taken place over the course of history can affect the perceptions and representation of earlier history in many ways. One such major historical change in the current case was colonialism. Whereas it is important to focus on the disruptive and often detrimental effects of colonialism, it is also important not to forget that there is an African history before colonialism, and to focus on continual processes as well. There are many patterns and processes of change that overlap and link the two periods, and a sole focus on the discontinuous might be counterproductive (Atkinson, 1989) as well as Eurocentric.

Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. In the case of the Acholi, the first written sources date from the 1860s[10] (ibid.) – 39 years before the region's incorporation into the British protectorate but nevertheless written by European 'explorers' with a white supremacist gaze – and subsequent research was always based on the collection of oral tradition. The latter is a valuable source, but its results should permanently be interpreted with caution as it is affected by the social frame of the one providing the details of the oral tradition as well as the one who interpreted it and wrote it down. In the current case, it is also evident that there is not much material to compare, as not many people have done such research in the area.

With these caveats in mind, I still believe that it is important to elaborate briefly on some of the conceptions regarding the history of the Acholi, who are today considered to be a distinct ethnic group. This is important

10 Samuel Baker traveled to central Africa in the 1860s and 'discovered' Lake Albert. He wrote two books: The Albert Nyanza (2 volumes, published in 1866) and Ismailia: A narrative of the expedition to central Africa for the suppression of the slave trade (2 volumes, published in 1874) (see Atkinson, 1989).

because the people I interviewed almost exclusively identified as Acholi,[11] and even though ethnic communities might be constructed, this does not make belonging to them any less real or significant in the lives of people. As will be maintained throughout this book, the past has a way of influencing the present and it is important to place a people in their appropriate (political and) historical context.

Political and social organization before colonization and the foundations of ethnicity

Speaking of 'the Acholi' in a pre-colonial context is complicated because there is a discussion as to when the Acholi ethnic identity came into being. Whereas some argue that the Acholi society came into being in the late 17th century (Atkinson 1994), others argue that the Acholi as a distinct identity was a British creation (Amone & Muura, 2014). In line with the difficulties outlined in the previous section, the disagreements here are more about defining the thresholds of ethnicity and coherence among people than about population movements or the details of political organization. Amone and Muura (2014), in fact, often cite Atkinson's work on the history of the Acholi and also speak about 'the pre-colonial Acholi society' (p. 240). In this subsection, I will trace the various aspects of the process of becoming and the process of articulation that have shaped the Acholi ethnic identity over time.

Long before anyone even spoke of an Acholi society, however, the area was already inhabited. It is generally assumed that the area that is now inhabited by the Acholi has been a meeting point of languages belonging to the Nilotic and Sudanic language families, spoken here as early as 1,000 years BC (Atkinson, 1989; Girling, 1960). This can still be seen when one looks at an ethnographic map of Uganda (see Map 2, on page 19). The current map stops at the colonial borders, but actually the Acholi region stretches across the central-northern part of Uganda as well as across the border into what is now South Sudan (Girling, 1960). It stretches over 15,000 square miles to the east of the Albert Nile, and 11,000 square miles of this territory are occupied by the Acholi of Uganda (Amone & Muura, 2014). In the west, the Acholi are bordered by the Alur, Jonam, and Sudanic-speaking Madi. To the east, they are bordered by the Nilo-Hamitic-speaking Karimojong, Jie, and Labwor, and to the south they are bordered by the Bantu-speaking Banyoro and the

11 Two women formed the exception, as they identified both as Acholi and Madi. They were born as part of the Madi ethnic group, but married Acholi men and bore their children. According to the Acholi, this then means that both the woman and the children automatically become Acholi.

Nilotic Chope and Langi. In the north, the Imatong mountains separate the Acholi from their Didinga, Lotugho, Dodoth, and Dinka neighbors in South Sudan (Amone & Muura, 2014; Atkinson, 1989; Girling, 1960).

It is estimated that for 2,000 years or more, the Acholi region has been inhabited by settled agricultural populations that engaged in hunting and the tending of small stock as complements (Atkinson, 1989) – similar to the sustenance model of many Acholi in the current villages. There is no definite evidence of how the Acholi language (a part of the Western Nilotic language family and specifically the Luo language family) came to be dominant in the area. Some postulate that Luo-speaking groups migrated south to the area from the Sudan (Crazzolara (1937), as cited in Girling, 1960), and others argue that the Luo language only took hold later, by the late 17th century, when political ideas rather than large numbers of people were brought to the area by Luo-speaking inhabitants of Paluo in the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom (Atkinson, 1994).

The political ideas Atkinson refers to deserve attention, as these formed the basis of a political organization that seems to have been in place long before outsiders attempted to subjugate the population in northern Uganda and that still is (in a modified and probably less prominent way) of importance in Acholi society. The first descriptions of people living in the region, dated around the 1860s, showed that the people were organized into numerous chiefdoms – about sixty (Amone & Muura, 2014) to eighty (Atkinson, 1989) of them. Each chiefdom was in turn made up of several villages as well as land used for agriculture or for hunting (Girling, 1960). It was estimated that there were about a quarter of a million people living in the area, with the size of chiefdoms ranging between 500 and 20,000 people, with most in the 2,000 to 4,000 range (Atkinson, 1989).

The chiefdom was headed by a hereditary leader known as the *rwot* (plural *rwodi*).[12] The chief enjoyed great prestige and respect. The possession of royal drums symbolized this chiefly authority as well as the political independence of each chiefdom. The chief was given tribute by his subjects in the shape of labour during clearing and harvesting and a portion of each game animal killed. The rendering of such tribute acknowledged the rule of that chief, and was usually subsequently redistributed by the chief in calculated ways

12 The chiefdoms were often named after one of the (male) ancestors by using the prefix 'Pa', followed by a name. Pabo, for example, means 'Of-Bo', 'Bo' being one of the ancestral chiefs of this chiefdom.

to demonstrate generosity, to reward subjects collectively or individually for their labour or bravery, and ultimately to incite people to accept his leadership (Atkinson, 1989).

The result was thus that the chief's family did not accumulate much wealth itself. In addition to little personal wealth, a *rwot*'s coercive power was also limited, as the system was essentially highly decentralized. The core of each of the villages in a chiefdom would consist of a patrilineal lineage (also referred to as '*kaka*', or someone's clan), and the head of each of these lineages as well as elders shared in the political authority and decision-making processes (ibid.).

On a lower level, each agnatic kinsman would have an own household. The households within the chiefdom could be scattered over a radius of over a mile, but mostly several households would be grouped together into a hamlet, consisting of the families of a father and his adult sons or several brothers and their adult sons (Girling, 1960). The wives of these men had become part of the *kaka* through marriage, and would usually move to the husband's village. The children that were born from such a marriage were 'regarded not as a hybrid, but as a pure descendant of the male stock' (ibid., p. 24). A household could also consist of a man with several wives. In such a case, the domestic family would be a separate unit to a certain degree, as each wife would have her own fields, granaries, and living hut, but all wives would be 'united by their submission to the common authority of the household's head' (ibid., p. 27).

Within the hamlet, most of the day-to-day economic and social cooperation would take place. Men would cooperate with other men to perform their duties: the heavy work of agriculture (such as breaking the land), herding domestic animals, hunting, hut-building, and, if need-be, fighting. Women, on the other hand, were responsible for weeding the fields, colleting the harvest, fetching water and firewood, preparing food, and taking care of the children (ibid.). In the evening, the members of the hamlet would come together around the '*wang-o*', the fireplace, to share a meal (Girling, 1960) and tell stories (Finnström, 2008). The center of the hamlet was also the place for the ancestor shrine. According to Girling (1960), this usually consisted of two bark cloth trees that were planted some feet apart, but had their branches intertwined. Beneath this, offerings for the ancestors were placed. Overall, the hamlet was thus an important place for maintaining clan-ties (both in everyday life and in the spiritual sense) and promoting internal cooperation.

Let us return, however, to the higher levels of social interaction. Even though various authors agree on this depiction of what the Acholi political organization looked like shortly before the area was colonized, there is debate about whether the various chiefdoms can be grouped together and considered part of one and the same ethnicity. The prevalence of the Luo language is cited by Atkinson (1994) as an important marker for the development of the Acholi ethnic identity, but he also recognized that by the mid-nineteenth century there was hardly any cooperation and unity among the chiefdoms.

Before the first European arrived in Acholiland, the area was invaded by Arabic-speaking slave- and ivory traders from the Sudan – referred to by the Acholi as '*Kutoria*' – in the 1850s (Atkinson, 1989). In fact, the *Kutoria* established one of their three stations in Pabo, which was one of the larger chiefdoms, ranging in size between 7,000 (Atkinson, 1994) and 25,000 people (Amone & Muura, 2014). The *Kutoria* period was forced to a close by 1872 following British pressure on the Egyptian government to halt slave trading by its subjects[13] (Atkinson, 1989). Hired by the Egyptian government, the British Samuel Baker was the leader of an expedition to oust the *Kutoria* and to set up an administration in their stead – as such establishing Equatorial Province, which included the southern part of modern-day South Sudan and the northern part of Uganda (ibid.).

While this was a relief for some of the people who had suffered from the slave trade, it also quickly became clear that philanthropy was being used to disguise imperialism (Amone & Muura, 2014). The *Jadiya* administrators – who ruled Equatorial Province as representatives of Cairo (Atikinson, 1989) – that were left behind by Baker proved to be much more oppressive than the *Kutoria* had been. They set up several more substations and demanded a grain tax, which was collected in excessive amounts and with excessive force (Atkinson, 1989). They also administered harsh, unjust, and unpredictable 'justice' and interfered in inter- and intra-chiefdom affairs (ibid.). In response, several Acholi attacks took place against them from 1885 onwards, and by 1888 they were defeated and withdrew from the region (ibid.).

These outsiders, affiliated first with Khartoum and subsequently with Cairo (and always influenced by the Europeans), had a substantial effect on the Acholi society. The trade that came with them as well as the raiding of other chiefdoms they initiated had different effects on different segments of the population. On the one hand, many Acholi people were sold into slavery,

13 By this time, the Sudan was part of Egypt (Amone & Muura, 2014).

leaving the area devastated and depopulated (Amone & Muura, 2014). On the other hand, new wealth was introduced among the Acholi, mostly in the form of ivory, cattle, and firearms (Atkinson, 1989). The *rwodi* were the main recipients of this wealth, and, for the first time, wealth started centralizing in their hands. Instead of redistributing this wealth, it was now passed on to the *rwot*'s sons and other kinsmen (ibid.).

The time of the *Kutoria* was also the time when the Acholi were first named as a larger entity (ibid.). From writings by Europeans who subsequently started frequenting the area, it becomes clear that by 1872, the name *'Shuli'*[14] had become entrenched to refer to the multiple chiefdoms in the area. The main reason for this shared name was that people spoke Luo as a first or second language in all the chiefdoms (ibid.). According to Atkinson (1989), there was still very little Acholi-wide cooperation or organization, but as the people themselves also started using this term in their interaction with outsiders, there was indeed a process of articulation. For this reason, Atkinson designated the second half of the 19th century as the period during which the foundation for a collective Acholi identity was laid.

Crucially, there was indeed political organization in the area that is now known as Acholiland before the arrival of the British. Even though there might have been little cooperation among these chiefdoms, the fact that they were organized in a similar manner and that the inhabitants all spoke Luo were important for the creation and solidification of an ethnic identity in later times. The organization into chiefdoms and the emphasis on the important position of male clan heads and heads of households are elements that continued to be relevant during colonial times and that still have relevance in Acholi society today.

Colonization and its effects

Only six years after the withdrawal of the Egyptian administrators, in 1894, British colonizers declared the establishment of the Uganda Protectorate – the boundaries of which corresponded roughly to those of present-day Uganda (Adyanga, 2011). Colonization of the region had differing effects across the new state, but overall it can be said that British rule led to several divides in Ugandan society and started the institutionalization of particular

14 This name was given to them by the traders from the Sudan and was also the name printed on the maps of Baker and his successor Emin Pasha (Girling, 1960). Baker used the spelling 'Shooli', and it was reported that the people themselves rather spoke of 'Chuuli' (Atkinson, 1989).

forms of structural violence, also against the Acholi of northern Uganda. As such, the roots of many of the tensions that have plagued Uganda and still have an impact today lie in the colonial era.

As elaborated in the previous section, power structures and political systems were already in place in Uganda before colonization. This simple given led to the first division, as what ensued was a state that contained both a (colonial) civil power and customary power. A bifurcated state emerged in Uganda, as it did in many colonial territories, due to the British policy of indirect rule. This meant that the British enforced their rule through the appointment of local civil servants, or a 'native administration'. In the case of the Acholi, this meant that a new '*rwot*' or County Chief was appointed – often one that did not have a claim to authority as described in the previous subsection. That the British Administration did not care much for the Acholi tradition regarding the succession of *rwodi* was expressed by Postlethwaite, a colonial administrator between 1909 and 1932 (Finnström, 2008), when he wrote:

> […] in the event of a change of chieftainship, the claims of the man who would succeed according to native custom are considered, but, should it be decided that this successor is incapable of being more than a chief in the old Acholi conception of the word, and could not carry out the Government requirements, he is set aside and a more suitable man put in regardless if need be of relationship.(as cited in Girling, 1960, p. 84)

The result of this policy was the emergence of two parallel systems, as the Acholi continued to recognize the hereditary *rwot* alongside those who were appointed as part of the 'native administration' (Girling, 1960).

This situation was rather different from the situation in the south of the country, where the British found (to varying degrees) centralized monarchical systems (Branch, 2011). Within these systems, administrative chiefs were often appointed by the king and thus not lineage-based. This, as well as the centralized nature of these political structures, made it easier for the British to appoint local agents to enforce their policies. As discussed in the previous section, the Acholi were not united in an overarching kingdom; moreover, power was highly decentralized even within the chiefdoms that existed. Aside from the chiefs, representatives of lineages, bodies of elders, spiritual leaders, rainmakers, and others also held a lot of power.

From the colonizers' point of view, this 'lack of' political organization and civilization indicated that the north was inferior (Finnström, 2003, p. 65).

This idea aligned with the predominant primordial British conceptions regarding 'tribes' in Africa. These conceptions had several concrete effects in Uganda. Importantly, it led to an economic north-south divide in the country. Generally speaking, the Protectorate was divided into a labour zone and a production zone, whereby people from the former would provide labour for the latter (Amone & Muura, 2014). This division was based on the assumed natural qualities of the different people living in the country; the people in the north were seen as strong and hardworking, and people from the south were seen as weak but intellectually superior (ibid.).

The idea of the Acholi as strong and even militaristic also led to the overrepresentation of the Acholi in the police and the army (Atkinson, 2009, p. 4; Finnström, 2003, p. 92). Especially during the 1930s and 1940s, many Acholi were employed by the national government in civil service positions and in the army. Simultaneously, cash cropping was discouraged in the north, which resulted in only a small landholding class and no significant private sector (Branch, 2011). The south, on the other hand, became relatively developed under colonial rule (Jackson, 2002b). The combination of ethnic stereotyping and active British policy can be said to have resulted in an economic gap and in the Acholi becoming largely dependent upon the national government for employment (Branch, 2011).

Another way in which ethnic identity was essentialized and reified was through the re-drawing of administrative borders. In 1937, the colonial administration decided to make ethnic belonging more politically tangible in the north by merging several districts into one district: Acholiland (Finnström, 2003, p. 61).

Adding to this was inequality in terms of initial incorporation into the colonial state: northern 'tribes' were incorporated into the Uganda Protectorate as districts, whereas the southern political communities were incorporated as kingdoms through treaties. This formalized regional inequality as the kingdoms were allotted more privileges than the districts and also firmly brought ethnic identity in as a dominant political category (Branch, 2011). When Uganda became independent in 1962, this inequality was not rectified but rather re-emphasized as the southern kingdoms (and especially Buganda) were again granted more privileges (ibid.). As such, a politicized ethno-regional divide pitted the Bantu-speaking southerners against the Nilotic northerners, and the subsequent rapid succession of leaders with

loyalties to different groups would lead to a violent tit-for-tat in which the Ugandan civilians were the main victims.[15]

Independence and the continuation of the north-south divide

When, upon independence, Milton Obote – a Langi from northern Uganda – was instated as the country's first president, he tried to 'rectify' the regional inequalities by favoring the north. His rule was marked by efforts at top-down reform of the country in order to achieve what he saw as ethnic equalization and thus the elimination of the privileges the southern kingdoms had acquired (Branch, 2011). In order to achieve this, he centralized power, created the one-party state, and established a powerful army. In order to create a social support base, he made broad use of political patronage among the Acholi and the Langi (ibid.).

Obote's rule, however, was cut short by a coup by Idi Amin in 1971 (ibid.). This coup showed that ethnic identity was, at this point, more important in Uganda than regional identity; Amin was also from the north, but had different ethnic loyalties as he was from the far north-west. What followed under Amin was a purge of Acholi and Langi from the army, security forces, and civil service. Additionally, tens of thousands of civilians were killed in the north of the country and the Acholi middle-class was easily wiped out because of its dependence on the state (ibid.).

The years following this were marked by a rapid succession of leaders and the start of a first all-out civil war. Idi Amin was toppled by the Tanzanian army in 1979 and the Obote II government was installed after what was generally seen as a flawed election (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 6). After five years in power, Obote's Acholi-Langi coalition fell apart, and he was ousted through a coup by Acholi forces led by Tito Okello and Brazilio Okello (Branch, 2011). Yet, a rebel group under the leadership of Yoweri Museveni that had emerged in 1981 under the Obote II regime continued to cause trouble. The rebel group, which would become known as the National Resistance Army (NRA), consisted mostly of Banyankole, from the southwest of Uganda, and Tutsi. The NRA framed the hostilities (which became known as the 'Bush War') against the Obote and Okello governments as a broader conflict of the south against the north, which was distilled into a war against the Acholi as the embodiment of state power (ibid.). The group took Kampala in 1986,

15 More information and details about the way in which different leaders victimized different ethnic groups can be found in i.a. Allen and Vlassenroot (2010).

making the Okello government short-lived and bringing an end to Uganda's succession of rulers from the north (Finnström, 2008). Museveni still rules Uganda today, through the National Resistance Movement.

The LRA conflict (1986-2006) and civilian life

When exactly a civil war starts is always a matter of debate. Looking at Uganda's history since colonization, it becomes clear that there had never really been peace in the country as a whole. As such, what followed under Museveni's rule was largely a continuation of civil strife with a lasting ethnic, regional, and economic component. Additionally, the Acholi customary power structures had been significantly shaken up by colonial policy, and the disturbing effects of this were still felt among the Acholi. As Branch (2011) argues, there were thus two crises plaguing the Acholi people on a broad level: on the one hand, there was an internal crisis that stemmed from the breakdown of authority within Acholi society; on the other hand, there was the national crisis of exclusion from the state. This combined with an increased military presence of the NRM in the north and the return of young, armed men who had fought in the Obote II army (Branch, 2010; 2011), proved to be a breeding ground for the emergence of various rebel groups.

Prior to the group that is best known today, namely the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), two other rebel groups arose in the north. The first was the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA).[16] The group emerged in 1986 and consisted mostly of fighters from the former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), which was the national army under the Obote II regime (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 7). The UPDA, however, was unable to achieve any significant military victories and fractured into ever smaller pieces, with its members often joining other militant groups (Branch, 2011). At this time, another rebellious organization emerged: the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). The HSM was led by Alice Lakwena, who was a spirit medium and healer in Gulu Town (Allen, 1991). Spreading a message of salvation for the Acholi, Alice was able to gather a group of followers who were willing to fight with her (Behrends, 1992). In 1987, the Holy Spirit Movement launched an offensive into southern Uganda and with a few thousand men, Alice reached within 80 miles of Kampala, but was then defeated (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 9).

16 According to Finnström (2008), the UPDA was also sometimes called 'Cilil' (which means something like 'go and gossip' or 'let the government know', p. 71). Some of my interviewees also spoke of this movement and while some believed Cilil was the same as the Holy Spirit Movement, others indeed used it to refer to the earlier UPDA.

These two rebel organizations may have been defeated, but this did not defeat the sense of dissatisfaction felt by many Acholi. As such, another rebel group could gain ground. This group was led by Joseph Kony, a nephew to Alice. The discourse of struggle somewhat changed, but the group did maintain the spiritual component that was so important under the HSM. The NRA/M was still the main enemy, but, according to the LRA, the NRA/M had now gained ground among the Acholi themselves, in the form of Acholi agents who supported the state (Branch, 2010, pp. 40-41). This meant that those who were considered to be 'false' Acholi had to be violently countered (Branch, 2011).

What began as a small group surrounding the persona of Joseph Kony grew into a movement whose members were speculated to be in the thousands (exact numbers have never been clear (Branch, 2010)). Many of the people who were with the LRA were abducted into the ranks. The LRA made extensive use of child soldiers and engaged in widespread violence against civilians in the form of murder, rape, mutilation, arson, and theft (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1997, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). Apart from terror tactics, battles between the LRA and the government also took place, and by 1994 the conflict escalated in such a way that it officially reached the 1,000 battle-related deaths threshold that many believe to be the formal indicator of civil war (Themnér, 2016).

In part, the conflict escalated due to the involvement of several international actors. Firstly, the Sudanese government decided to back the LRA. The reason for this support was that Museveni had openly backed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) – an insurgency Sudan was facing on its own turf. By backing the LRA in return, Sudan aimed to destabilize the Ugandan government and to regain its edge over the SPLM/A (Van Acker, 2004, p. 338).

By 2001, however, the US declared the LRA to be a terrorist organization, and in an effort to boost its image, Sudan claimed to have stopped its support of the LRA (HRW, 2003b). In 2002, this claim crystalized in the shape of an agreement between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments: Sudan would allow Ugandan troops to enter southern Sudan in order to chase the LRA from there (Atkinson, 2009). In early March of that year, over 10,000 men of the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF, Uganda's national army) started what would be the first major counter-insurgency operation, dubbed 'Operation Iron Fist' (HRW, 2003b).

Operation Iron Fist was followed by Operation Iron Fist II in 2004 (Vinci, 2005), and later, in 2008-2009, by Operation Iron Thunder (HRW, 2009; Norwegian Council for Africa, 2009). For the latter, the Ugandan government received planning- and intelligence-gathering support from Sudan and the US (Atkinson, 2009). Additionally, the DRC allowed the UPDF into its territory in order to chase the LRA in Garamba National Park – a park in the north-east of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to where the LRA had shifted its bases in 2005. These counterinsurgency operations may have hit the LRA, but the movement was never defeated, and it has even been found that the backlash of these counter-insurgency efforts was increased violence against civilians on the part of the LRA (ibid.).

Aside from these violent confrontations, however, there was also a series of direct and indirect peace talks between 2002 and 2008 (ibid.). Most importantly, peace talks in 2006 led to the signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (ibid.). Many consider this year to signify the end of the LRA war, but it can also be argued that the situation was actually a bit more complicated. Firstly, a final peace agreement was never signed by the parties to the conflict. Secondly, the LRA has continued its violence against civilians outside of Uganda, notably in South Sudan, the DRC, and the Central African Republic (CAR) – this was even still ongoing during the time of my fieldwork (HRW, 2009, 2010, 2012; African Independent, 2017). The latter also led to the continuation of counter-insurgency efforts, with Operation Lightning Thunder still taking place in 2008-2009. Fourthly, there is the consideration of seeing peace as a more comprehensive process than simply the cessation of direct physical violence – an issue I will return to in the next chapter.

Violence against civilians: When two elephants fight, the grass gets trampled

Those who have been most affected by the civil war are civilians. This is not an exceptional situation considering the way in which most wars have been fought since World War II, but the levels of deliberate violence against civilians and internal displacement are extremely high in this case. According to the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (UCDP GED) (2017a, 2017b), the LRA killed 7,715 civilians between 1989 and 2016 in the territories of Uganda, the DRC, the CAR, and (South) Sudan, and the government of Uganda killed

253 civilians. These numbers are based on moderate estimates and public records, meaning that the true numbers are probably much higher.[17]

In addition, there is the fact that physical violence is much broader than only murder. There were hundreds of thousands of cases of mutilation, destruction of property, abduction, torture, rape, and forced conscription of children, as is extensively documented (for the case of the LRA) by Human Rights Watch (1997, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). The government's use of such violence against civilians has been significantly under-discussed. Whether or not violence against civilians is strategic and what the underlying motives for it may be is heavily debated in different fields of political science (see e.g. Downes 2006; Fjelde & Hultman 2014; Hultman 2009; Kalyvas 2006; Mkandawire 2002; Weinstein 2007), but a discussion on this is beyond the scope of the current work.

During my fieldwork, the extent of violence against civilians by both parties to the conflict became stunningly clear; each and every one of my informants as well as locals I met in my daily life in Gulu had directly or indirectly experienced violence. These horror stories are not the main focus of this book, but it is clear that these experiences have shaped the lives of the people I have spoken with to a large extent. What the main starting point of the book is, is the experience of displacement – a rather different form of violence, as will be argued in the next chapter. At the height of the war it was estimated that as much as 80 per cent of the population of certain northern districts was forcibly displaced (Dolan, 2009). The living conditions in the displacement camps will be discussed in the following paragraphs, and this will set the broader scene for the introduction of the research site of concern for this work: Pabo.

The IDP camps

The government opened the first IDP camps in October 1996 and decided to label them 'protected villages' or 'protected camps' rather than displacement camps (Dolan, 2009, p. 107). Some people moved to the camps out of free will, but as of 27 September 1996, President Museveni declared that moving

17 The UCDP GED does not provide any details (aside from date and number of casualties) on the instances of violence. In the case of the number of deaths through one-sided violence by the government, it is likely that the number is much higher; collateral damage due to the counterinsurgency operations as well as the forced move to camp (to be discussed in the next subsection) and the inability to discern LRA fighters from ordinary civilians all make it likely that this number was much higher.

to the camps was now compulsory, and the UPDF started violently chasing people out of their villages (Finnström, 2003, pp. 193-194). The result was that, at the peak in 2005, 1.84 million people were displaced into 251 camps of varying sizes across 11 districts of northern Uganda (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2012). The districts that were most heavily affected were Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader,[18] where more than 80 per cent of the population had been displaced (Dolan, 2009). These were also the districts inhabited largely by Acholi people, making them the main victims not only of LRA violence, but also of government policy.

The camps were established under the proclaimed aim of making it easier to protect civilians from attacks by the LRA. In reality, however, the circumstances in the camps were in many ways no better and often even worse than in the villages the civilians came from. Firstly, there was actually a lack of protection. Some inhabitants of the camps described that they functioned as a 'shield' for the UPDF soldiers since the barracks were usually located in the middle of the camp rather than on the outskirts (Finnström, 2003, p. 41). The LRA continued to attack the camps on several occasions and was still able to abduct and murder civilians (Dolan, 2009). Additionally, in its propaganda, the LRA likened the IDP camps to concentration camps, urging people to leave the sites and sometimes even setting peoples' huts on fire to force them out (Finnström, 2003). This meant that the people in the camps were truly trapped, with the LRA on the one hand trying to force them to leave the camp, and the UPDF on the other hand forcing them to stay inside the camps.

Importantly, the LRA was not the only violent threat to the civilians in the camps. Soldiers have been accused of taking or destroying property of civilians, forcing them to work for them, or even attacking civilians while disguised as rebels (Dolan, 2009). Additionally, the soldiers have been widely accused of rape, forcing destitute girls and women into prostitution, and spreading HIV/AIDS (ibid.). The UPDF's behaviour and the way in which it went unpunished added to the mistrust of many Acholi people towards the government.

A second way in which the lives of the people in the camps deteriorated rather than improved was that there was a lack of access to facilities. Many of the camps were highly congested, which meant that basic services such as

18 This was according to old district lines. In 2005, Gulu district was split up into two districts: Gulu and Amuru. The new district line can be seen on Map 1 on page 18.

water, food, healthcare, shelter, and education were certainly not available to everyone (ibid.). Congestion of the camps, the sharing of one pit latrine with sometimes over one hundred people, and a lack of access to clean water also meant that diseases such as tuberculosis and cholera could easily spread. Additionally, malaria took many more lives than it would have, had there been decent access to health care (ibid.). Malnutrition was also a serious problem and contributed to child mortality (ibid.; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2005). All of these together led to a high death toll. Food aid distribution did take place and was more successful in some camps than in others, but was overall spotty at best (Dolan, 2009). Finally, access to education was low, as most of the schools had been displaced (IDMC, 2005), many pupils dropped out, and teachers were demotivated (Dolan, 2009).

This lack of facilities constituted a direct infringement on a range of human rights such as access to clean water, education, and more. At the same time, these practical changes also had an impact on the culture and traditions of the Acholi. I will treat this topic more elaborately in Chapter 6, but I will briefly exemplify a few practical ways in which this happened here. Firstly, the displacement constituted a complete disruption of the Acholi's usual settlement patterns. The settlement pattern of the Acholi, as described in the previous section, was one of scattered households and villages; yet, in forced displacement, tens of thousands of people were crammed into a few square kilometers (ibid.). In a way, this constituted a rupture in culture because now people from different families, clans, and ethnic groups were living in extremely close proximity of each other. Additionally, (young) people would more easily come into contact with other customs as well as with Western culture through the work of NGOs. In a different way, the curfew disrupted some long-standing rituals, such as compound fires, whereby elders would tell stories and convey norms and values to younger generations (Finnström, 2003, p. 201).

The forced encampment also affected the tradition of the Acholi as subsistence farmers. Whereas many people had land to cultivate before the war, they now lost access to their land and thus to their means of production. This made people truly dependent on aid and led to idleness and boredom. Additionally, not being able to work constituted the loss of a part of some people's identity. On top of the loss of access to land, most of the Acholi's cattle was lost due to raids by the Karamojong (who some claimed were government agents) or due to the move to camp and inability to keep livestock in this confined place. Many saw this not only as a long-term economic loss, but also a loss of status and prestige (Finnström, 2003). Furthermore, it resulted in an inability to

pay the bride price and thus threatened an important Acholi custom (ibid.). Again, these issues will return in Chapters 5 and 6 of this book.

Overall, it can be seen that the forced encampment of civilians in northern Uganda may have been part of a protection- or counter-insurgency scheme by the government, but also that there was definitely an element of (structural) violence against civilians.[19] As the role of the government and aid agencies in orchestrating and perpetuating the humanitarian crisis were muffled, and the civilians were portrayed as passive victims, a serious gap in knowledge has emerged. The current research aims to contribute to filling that gap by listening to the stories of some of those who experienced life in the camp and who still deal with the consequences.

Pabo

Keeping all the background information in mind, I would now like to turn to the location where the current research took place. Pabo is located approximately 40 kilometers north of Gulu, which is the largest town in northern Uganda. The name 'Pabo' or 'Pabbo' is used to refer to the sub-county as well as to the sub-county's main trading center. I am usually referring to the latter when I use 'Pabo', as this was also where the research took place. Pabo trading center, or, more accurately, Pabo Kal or Kal parish, is thus part of Pabo sub-county, which, in turn, is part of Amuru district.

In fact, during the war, Pabo was part of Gulu district, but at the time of research and writing it was part of Amuru district. This change was made in July 2005, officially as part of decentralization efforts aimed at better service delivery (Owot Samuel, personal communication, 2018). More recently, the number of districts in Uganda has taken an enormous leap, from 56 in 2000 to 111 in 2010 and to 121 districts in 2017 (Ministry of Local Government, 2017). In Map 1, at the beginning of this book, the districts inhabited mainly by Acholi people are depicted. Prior to 2005, Amuru district was non-existent as this territory was part of Gulu district.

Pabo sub-county consists of six parishes and 168 villages[20] (Land Conflict Mapping Tool, 2018). By November 2017, Pabo sub-county had a recorded

19 I will elaborate more on this statement in the next chapter.

20 Note that I could not identify the Land Conflict Mapping Tool's criteria for what would qualify as a village. This number, however, should give an impression of the size of Pabo sub-county and indicate how intricate and localized government is in this area.

53,305 inhabitants and Pabo Kal had 8,840 inhabitants.[21] Before Pabo became a refugee camp, the number of inhabitants was much lower: around 1990-1995, the number of residents of Pabo sub-county was estimated at 32,000 and Pabo Kal's at 4,500. Long before that, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Pabo already used to be one of the larger Acholi chiefdoms. With shifting district-, sub-county-, and village boundaries, varying definitions of what it means to be an official inhabitant of a place, and the lack of resources for proper population census throughout these periods, it is hard to paint an accurate picture of Pabo and its development. What is clear, however, is that Pabo has historically been one of the larger villages in northern Uganda and that it continues to be so.

What must also be acknowledged is that forces such as population growth and urbanization (in this case, people settling in Pabo Kal) might have had led Pabo to grow even if the civil war or setting up of a displacement camp had not taken place. An additional factor that probably contributed to the increased population of Pabo Kal was the construction of a tarmac road between Gulu and Nimule, South Sudan. This 105-kilometer road was commissioned in 2015. As it connects Pabo to South Sudan as well as some larger towns in northern Uganda such as Atiak, Pawel, and Gulu, it offers many opportunities for both trade and hospitality businesses. The construction of this road is likely to have made Pabo, and specifically Pabo Kal, a more attractive place to live.

In reality, however, it is impossible to think of Pabo without considering its history as the site of one of the largest IDP camps of northern Uganda at the time of the country's civil war. Despite the official closing of the camp in 2008 (David, former camp leader, interview 2), the landscape as well as the people still bore the scars of these bitter times.

In the following section, I attempt to paint a picture of what life was like in Pabo during the time of the camp. Despite its status as the largest IDP camp in the north of Uganda and despite the presence of many NGOs during the war, it is not easy to find information on Pabo online. The people I have spoken with, however, were living testimonies to what the situation was like in the camp. The current account of life in Pabo during the time of the camp centers around the experiences of the people I have spoken with and is

21 This information was acquired by Owot Samuel in November 2017 from Pabo's sub-county headquarters.

compared with and complemented by data found by other researchers and organizations.

'Kwo camp'[22]

Pabo camp was officially opened by the government in 1996 (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2005). The result was a steady, yet overwhelming, influx[23] of people from different villages around the sub-county's main trading center into the camp. At its opening, the camp held around 30,000 people (UNICEF, 2005), yet by 2005 this number had peaked to 67,000 people, making it the largest IDP camp in Gulu district (David, former camp leader, interview 2[24]). According to UNICEF (2005) research, the people in the camp were mostly Acholi, but the camp also housed people from the Langi and Madi ethnic groups as well as some Bantu-speaking people.

Overall, it can be seen from the experiences of people I have spoken with that life in Pabo was not much different from the general picture of IDP camps sketched in the previous section. The forced nature of residence in the camp due to government policy and an indication of how bad it must have been were expressed by David, a former zonal leader[25] in the camp and retired member of the Local Council:[26]

> So staying in the camp is a problem. If you are just asking people: "Do you need to stay in camp?" I think most of the answer will be: "No, I better go and die in the village."

There were a few issues that consistently came up in the interviews I conducted for this research that highlight the concerns of the people who

22 'Kwo camp' is the Acholi expression for referring to what life was like during the time of the displacement camps. 'Kwo' is the Acholi word for life.

23 It is hard to get reliable data on the number of people in the camp at any given moment. The trend as visible from compiled data: 30,000 in 1996; 42,000+ in 1999; 57,896 in 2002; and 63,000-67,000 by 2005 (sources in order of years cited: UNICEF, 2005; Dolan, 2009; Ocitti, 2011; UNICEF, 2005 and David, 2017 (interview 2)).

24 The interview numbers refer to the list in Appendix 1. Here, (the fictitious) names and dates can be found.

25 Because of its size, Pabo camp was divided into seven zones (Samuel, interview 63), and each zone had its own main administrator.

26 Local government in this context consisted of five layers. The Local Council 1 is the lowest political administrative unit and is responsible for the village. The LC 2 is responsible for the parish, the LC3 for the sub-county, the LC4 for the county, and the LC5 for the district.

had to live with the reality of 'kwo camp'. The primary aspect almost all of the interviewees mentioned when reflecting on their time in the camp was the distribution of food. What is remembered is having to line up once a month to receive food donations from what they identified as either the government,[27] the United Nations (UN), or the World Food Program (WFP). Portions were generally not considered sufficient, and food shortage was often cited as one of the challenges of camp life. Additionally, registration for food was often reported as flawed due to corruption or because too many people were put together as a single household. It is my impression that the provision of food, more than any other type of commodity, is remembered so well because it constituted such a disruption in the eyes of the Acholi people; almost all were used to working in their own garden to get their food, so not being able to do this and having to stand in line and be so dependent upon others was an experience that stuck with people.

A similar situation of lining up for hours was described for getting access to water and healthcare. People reported having to stand in line for hours at a bore hole just to get a single jerrycan of water. Additionally, there were too few doctors despite the outbreaks of epidemics such as cholera. Related to health deficiencies was the lack of proper sanitation. It was 'hard to find toilets' (Jackson, LC1, interview 1) and there was 'feces everywhere' (Mama Collins, interview 37). This makes sense, as Dolan (2009) reported that there was only one pit latrine in Pabo for every 168 people by June 1998, which was not even at the camp's most crowded time. As a response to the hygiene problem, the local council leaders worked together with the police and the military to put in place and enforce hygiene laws (Jackson, interview 1).

Education, or rather the lack thereof, was cited by some of my younger interviewees as a serious issue. They remembered that the classrooms were overcrowded and that many children dropped out (Ojok Anthony, interview 47). This is confirmed by Dolan's (2009) finding that, by 1999, there were ten schools in the camp, which were supposed to provide education to an overwhelming number of 4,799 pupils. The most pressing – and, indeed, ongoing – issue was that of paying school fees. Many parents were not

27 Interestingly, many of my interviewees were under the impression that the Ugandan government was the one providing all the aid to the camps. Finnström (2003, p. 187) also reported that the government aimed to take credit for the provision of all services in the camps. During his research in the camps, he even heard that the people were told that if they voted for a party other than the NRM during the 2001 election, food aid would be withdrawn. Additionally, he found that NRM politicians were helped by the UPDF to access the camp to campaign but non-NRM politicians were denied access.

able to send their children to school because they simply could not afford it. As Oloo Isaac (interview 14) pointed out to me: the Acholi people were robbed of much because more than one generation was unable to receive good education. According to Isaac, the lack of education initiated a vicious circle of poverty as uneducated Acholi people are unable to get good jobs and therefore unable to send their own children to school. He believed that this was different for those people who received government support all this time (referring to the people in southern Uganda).

Another significant problem was housing and congestion. (Former) officials I spoke with generally denied that it was a problem for incoming refugees to find a place to stay, as the 'native' people of Pabo were said to be welcoming and willing to share or sell their land (Jackson and David, interviews 1 and 2). Yet, the impression I got from other people led me to conclude that it might indeed have been easy for some, but only for those who came with money to buy a piece of land. For others with fewer means it was hard to find a place to live, as exemplified by the stories of Alfred (interview 11 & 32) and Patience (interview 20). Alfred told me that, upon arrival, he had to sleep under a tree for two days. Subsequently, they put grass around the tree to form a sort of tent, and only after 'some good time' was he able to build an actual roundhouse. Patience, similarly, had no place to stay for a long time, and her family made a house completely out of grass. Furthermore, the experience of the young Akena Mike (interview 13 & 29) showed that some children who had lost their parents were homeless in the camp.

Housing issues were exacerbated by overcrowding and the outbreak of fires. According to Dolan (2009), the houses were tightly packed, with less than 1 meter between them. The huts in the camp were very small, and often inhabited by not only parents and children, but also grandparents or other extended family (David, interview 2). This lack of space was not only a social inconvenience, it also meant that, in case of a fire, many huts would burn down at once. Such fires were extensively reported by various interviewees. As Alfred (interview 11) told me:

> And the fire was so, so, so confusing, and people couldn't understand what the fire mean[t]. Because when you were sitting like this, now you see the smoke on the roof. You don't know where the fire is coming from.

The source of these frequent fires was unknown to many of the inhabitants of the camp. Some maintained that the huts were set on fire by magic or evil

spirits. Others believed that the rebels would come at night and set the huts on fire.

Rebel incursions into what was supposed to be a protected camp were indeed common in Pabo. According to data from the UCDP georeferenced dataset (2015), the camp was attacked by LRA members no less than 12 times, leading to the death of at least 100 civilians.[28] Some of my interviewees, who moved to the camp with children, also reported that some of them were abducted from there. This meant that even when they had housing in the camp, people would still have to run to the barracks at night or sleep close to them (Patience, interview 20). Others would instead go into the bush at night, where they would make a 'cocoon of soft grass' and sleep outside (Aber Lucy, interview 61). In addition to the violence by the LRA, the former UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights found that UPDF soldiers stationed in Pabo were accused of rape, robbery, and murder (Parker, n.d.). Overall, many of my informants considered the situation in Pabo unsafe.

The latter points to a dilemma many of the people I interviewed faced. Whereas some were violently forced out of their homes and into the camps by the UPDF, most reported that they moved to the camp voluntarily because they felt threatened by the LRA. At the same time, many also expressed their wish to go back to the village or said that they would leave the camp's perimeters as often as possible. They would then return to their own land to farm there or work on the lands of others to earn a little extra money. Alternatively, they would go out to look for firewood. Overall, there was regular movement between the camp and nearby villages.

I also talked with my interviewees about the broader societal effects of camp life on the Acholi people. I will return to this issue later, but, in summary, it can be said that some people spoke of many camp inhabitants leading an 'immoral life.' There were reports of prostitution, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. Additionally, there was no longer time for rituals or to engage in cultural activities because of 'panic and confusion' (Jane, interview 42).

Yet, if you pry a little bit deeper, people also have happy memories from their time in the camp. Children would play soccer at the school fields and make

28 The attacks took place between 1996 and 2004. The minimum estimates of civilians killed by the LRA are: 62 during various attacks in 1996; five in 1998; five in 2000; two in 2001; five in 2002; 20 in 2003; and five in 2004 (UCDP, 2015).

toys out of anything they could find. Moreover, there were benefits to coming into contact with people with different lifestyles or cultures. As Jane (interview 42) told me, living in the camp showed her that marriage could also be a happy union and was not necessarily as violent as she had experienced with her six co-wives. Genevieve also remembered a funny moment (interview 43). She was in the fourth class of primary school when she heard about an NGO that provided sanitary pads and other goods for girls who were old enough to menstruate. At this time, however, she did not have breasts yet and realized that she would not be very convincing. Ingeniously, she put stones in her bra, reported to the NGO, and happily received the gifts anyway – an achievement she and her friends had some good laughs about.

It is important to also acknowledge these happy moments, but it is clear that the overall picture of the time in the camps is grim. Most interviewees largely blamed the LRA for their suffering. Many had lost friends and family at the hands of the LRA, but it was probably also due to a fear of criticizing the government and being heard by what some identified as 'spies'. Isaac (interview 14), however, could speak more freely because he was a religious leader and therefore less dependent on the state. He told me that it was his conviction that whereas the good part about living in displacement camps was protection of the people, he also believed that the state had a 'hidden agenda' when it came to the camp. According to him, 'bringing Acholi in camps [wa]s one way of controlling them.' Agency was largely removed as other parties now controlled food and water supply, access to healthcare and education, income, freedom of movement, practice of culture, and much more.

After the Cessation of Hostilities agreement was signed in 2006, and LRA violence slowly subsided, people started to cautiously believe the war had ended. As such, NGOs and supranational organizations started to leave the country, and people gradually started to move out of the displacement camps. Pabo camp had officially closed by 2008. Jackson (interview 1) remembered that, over the course of four years, people started to steadily move out of the camps, either first to a satellite camp or directly back to a village or town. After the devastation of war, however, some decided not to leave their site of displacement or were forced to remain there, in one way or another. As will be elaborated on more extensively in the next chapter, the people who

remained in Pabo after the official end of the civil war were no longer of concern to the non-governmental or governmental organizations.

In this chapter, the discussion of the history of the Acholi has brought to the fore certain aspects of the group's social and political organization and it has also opened the door for insights into how this has been affected by displacement. As almost the entire Acholi population was displaced, this indeed constituted an immense shock to society. People no longer lived miles away from each other, traditional political- and social structures eroded, and many rituals were no longer performed. Additionally, the north-south divide in Uganda that first proliferated during colonization became further pronounced. The impact of these and many other effects of displacement are still felt by many Acholi people today, and it can be argued that, in some ways, positive peace has not yet been achieved. The short excerpts of people's stories as presented in this last section constitute a small preview of the stories that are to come in this book and that further explore the long-term effects of the experience of displacement.

In the following chapter, I will pick up where this history ended, and continue to focus on what is officially the country's post-conflict period. Here, the issue of displacement will be considered in relation to peacebuilding, and its place in political science- and development discourse will be critically examined. Furthermore, the theoretical links between displacement and time and space will be explored. The exploration of time as an important concern in the study of displacement will reaffirm the importance of this past chapter.

Photo 5
Remnants of the camp

3 Concepts and policies: On the silencing of the displaced

This chapter continues where the previous one left off: in the official 'post-conflict' era. There are several phases of conflict resolution, and a tentative first step was made with the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) in 2006. As violence did not recur, people slowly started to believe that the agreement might hold this time. And, as this continued, one could actually start to speak of the emergence of a 'negative' peace (i.e. the absence of violence (Galtung, 1969)). Yet, it can be argued that this was only the beginning.

More constructive, long-lasting, or 'positive' peace required much more attention. Positive peace is a concept that was developed by Galtung in 1969 and developed in further work. According to him, positive peace refers to the absence of structural violence or the presence of social justice. This goes beyond the concept of negative peace, where the absence of direct, physical violence is sufficient. The activities aimed at the achievement of positive peace can be captured under the header of peacebuilding. In this chapter, the concepts of structural violence and peacebuilding will be used to get a better understanding of how the experience of displacement can be theorized and analysed. The situation in northern Uganda and specifically the experience of the people in Pabo, as described in the previous chapter, are at the basis of the interpretation and application of these concepts.

The topics of violence and peace are generally placed within the academic domains of political science and development studies. The work to achieve positive peace on the ground is done by national-, international-, supranational-, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Whereas it is often claimed that peacebuilding- and developmental work should be apolitical and non-partisan, it has been convincingly argued that this is impossible in light of modern conflict and disasters (Branch, 2011; Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010; Weiss, 1999). In this chapter, I will show how displacement fits within the peacebuilding framework. In this effort, I examine the issue of displacement from a policy perspective, and also look at how this played out in northern Uganda. Following this, I will discuss how the issue of displacement is treated in political science and development discourse. While I believe it

is important to look at the issue of displacement in the post-conflict context from a political angle, I will also emphasize the need for interdisciplinarity in both research and practice.

The need for this will become clear through a critical discussion of the aforementioned discourse. This will allow me to show that even though the knowledge that is created in this way is valuable and the practical work equally indispensable, there is also a tendency to dehumanize and silence displaced people. Following from this, I will argue that there is a need for increased historicity and context, specifically through paying attention to people's relationship to space, place, and time. The interdisciplinary conceptual framework that emerges from the different sections of this chapter will sketch a more elaborate picture of the topic at hand and provide a justification for the approach taken to finding answers to the questions that were presented in the introduction.

Displacement in the aftermath of civil war: Policies and practice

The tradition of conflict resolution and the development of peacebuilding

Closing refugee- or internal displacement camps is, in essence, a post-conflict task – as is the restoration of the lives of those who were or are displaced. Looking at it from a policy perspective, this makes it part of post-conflict peacebuilding. Yet, both peacebuilding and the role of displaced populations within this have not always been recognized as important. In this section, I will briefly elaborate on the history of peacebuilding and what it entails before moving on to a discussion of the role of internally displaced populations within this framework.

The groundwork for the establishment of peacebuilding as an important effort was laid shortly after the First World War, when conflict resolution – the broader tradition that peacebuilding is a part of – first surfaced as an area of interest. During this period, a desire for the procurement of global peace emerged, and the first international relations research institutes were set up and the League of Nations was established (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011). It was then that the desire to establish a 'science of peace' first surfaced (ibid., p. 37). Yet, it was only after the Second World War that the first peace and conflict research centers were opened. This time period is usually seen in light of the Cold War, as international relations were gravely

influenced by this. During this period, interstate relations were the main focus for research and were also at the basis of the establishment of the United Nations [UN], which came into existence in 1945. The UN followed in the footsteps of the League of Nations and soon became the most important supranational organization with the largest membership base. The UN grew out to fulfil, at the very least, an important leadership role in setting the moral agenda for peace and security.

It was during the 1960s and the 1970s that the interest of some groups of scholars and practitioners shifted to intrastate conflict as well, with social groups at the epicenter. This was definitely good news for those interested in wars in sub-Saharan Africa. As Herbst (2000) argued, interstate war as theorized by realists and liberalists with Western conceptions of how states are supposed to function, has little resonance with this part of the world. It was under scholars such as Johan Galtung (1969) and Edward Azar (1990) that attention for those conflicts that took place within state borders grew. Galtung, who started working in the 1960s, was a key figure in the development of the field of conflict resolution beyond the minimalist agenda of preventing war. Galtung developed the concept of positive peace, whereby issues of human empathy, solidarity, and community became important in addressing structural violence and transforming oppressive structures (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). I will illustrate the themes of structural violence and positive peace further in the next section when I apply them to the case of Uganda.

Edward Azar might be less well-known but was responsible for developing the idea of protracted social conflict. In his work, Azar (1991) emphasized lack of security, recognition, acceptance, economic participation, and fair access to political institutions for certain communal groups as causes for violent struggle – thus offering an alternative to realist theories solely concerned with hard power (as cited in Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Even though Galtung, Azar, and many other important peace researchers started their work during the Cold War period, they also laid the foundation for much of the thinking that would become important in the post-Cold War era.

The post-Cold War era – marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – is often considered a new phase in peace and conflict research because an old world order had collapsed. The most important shift in terms of conflict across the globe was from the prevalence of interstate war to the prevalence of intrastate war. The number of intrastate wars was especially high during the 1990s and to date continues to be more important than interstate war

(Ramsbotham et al., 2011). During this period, the interest in peace and conflict studies soared, and civil society started to become an important actor in this area as well (ibid.).

It was also in light of these developments that Mary Kaldor later dubbed the term 'new wars'. She argued that this is not the same as civil war per se, but rather refers to some of the features of modern wars. As Kaldor (2012) emphasized, the distinction between the internal and the external is blurred in modern wars as they are both local and global; they take place within a state, but are often marked by involvement of other states, the cross-boundary flow of people, and international arms trade. Crucially, new wars involve networks of state and non-state actors, and most violence is directed at civilians. As shown in the previous chapter, this was also the case in Uganda. It is in these new wars (which some have termed 'dirty wars') that disintegration of the state often occurs, alongside a decline in GDP, and that more divisive sectarian identities emerge that are manipulated by actors who whip up fear and hatred (Kaldor, 2005a, 2005b). It is in the nature of these 'new wars' that the challenges for peacebuilding lie.

Along with the transformation of wars, the tradition of conflict resolution also evolved. The UN started to expand its mandate as it moved from peacekeeping without military involvement under Chapter VI of its Charter to peace enforcement with use of force under Chapter VII. In first-generation peacekeeping, which was prominent during the Cold War era, political neutrality and impartiality were deemed of crucial importance as state sovereignty was of the utmost importance. But peacekeeping transformed after the Cold War. The international community sought to respond to a range of new challenges and as the Cold War-induced paralysis of the Security Council lifted, the number of operations increased dramatically. Importantly, the UN's failures to protect civilians in i.a. Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda led to the realization that the neutral, impartial, and mediating role of the UN was no longer sufficient. Consequently, direct involvement in the internal affairs of states was increasingly seen as acceptable when human lives were at stake (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

As this developed, the idea of peacebuilding was picked up both by the United Nations and by an emerging range of civil society organizations. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011, p. 32), citing Galtung, define peacebuilding as the effort to address structural issues and the long-term relationships between conflicting parties with the aim of overcoming the contradictions that lie at the root of conflict. Even with this definition, however, it is hard to say exactly

what peacebuilding entails, as it can comprise many different activities and efforts and even become so comprehensive that it has no bounds. Yet, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011) suggest four categories from which different aspects can be picked and mixed in the effort at building peace: security, the political framework, reconciliation and justice, and socio-economic foundations. Security refers to activities such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, security reform, and de-mining. The transformation of the political framework generally involves efforts at democratization and institution building. Reconciliation and justice involve dialogue, trauma therapy, and truth and reconciliation commissions. In the category of socio-economic foundations there is the reconstruction of different infrastructures, food security, and also the repatriation and return of refugees and IDPs (ibid.).

From this definition and attempt at identifying some of the tasks of peacebuilding, it immediately becomes clear that it is not something that is easy or a quick fix. In fact, peacebuilding is a lengthy and costly effort that involves many parallel and intricate processes. Unfortunately, this makes it a very unpopular investment from a political point of view despite its acknowledged importance. It is therefore also not surprising that the Peace Building Commission [PBC] of the UN, which was formed between 2004 and 2005, has a broad mandate but a relatively low budget (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). An additional factor that makes peacebuilding politically unattractive is that its results are often hard to measure, meaning that politicians will have little to show for the large investments that are needed to engage in post-conflict peacebuilding. This is especially the case when it comes to 'soft' issues such as reconciliation and social healing. Consequently, the focus has generally been on 'harder' issues such as disarmament, security sector reform, demining, institution- and state building, the organization of elections, and increasing a country's GDP. Importantly, the results of these efforts can be measured in concrete outcomes, often even in numbers (e.g. number of people disarmed, mines cleared, people who voted).

The importance of concrete outcomes and statistics to receive the necessary funds, mainly from countries whose inhabitants are far removed from such issues, is an unfortunate reality. It is unfortunate because many social aspects, which cannot be quantified, receive too little attention and money. It is also unfortunate because it has left much of the political science and development discourse with a lack of intellectual depth. The disciplines are hollowed out as the emphasis is rather on trying to be a 'science' in which people are numbers and statistical analyses the most important and acclaimed method

for generating knowledge on peace and conflict. This is due not in the least to the fact that this is indeed what is required of academics to have an impact on the realities of politics. It is a trend that is also visible in discourse surrounding refugees and internally displaced people, a point I will return to later on in this chapter.

IDPs in the international framework of peacebuilding

The nature of 'new wars', especially with their increased level of violence against civilians, has made it clear that displaced populations should have a place within post-conflict peacebuilding (Koser, 2007; Steinberg, 2007). The need to find a 'solution' for the many people who were forced to leave their homes was recently also acknowledged by the UN. The way in which the UN sees IDPs and how they should be treated is an important indicator since the UN is a major actor in providing such help as well as a 'trendsetter' in policy and morality.

As discussed in the previous section, peacebuilding developed gradually. It was only in 2001 that the UN started generating more attention for the plight of internally displaced persons (rather than only refugees). By this time, Sergio Vieira de Mello presented the first edition of the 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement' (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2004). A second edition appeared in 2004 (ibid.). The largest share of the latter document is devoted to the prevention of displacement and to the provision of assistance. The last three principles, however, are 'principles relating to return, settlement and reintegration' of IDPs in the post-conflict setting (ibid., pp. 14-15). Here, it is stated that IDPs have a right 'to return […] to their homes or places of habitual residence' (p. 14) or to resettle in another part of the country.[29]

More recently, the UN co-authored a framework that specified what would be considered sustainable solutions to the 'problem' of internally displaced people and how this could be measured. Here, it is stated that the needs of IDPs do not end when a conflict (or natural disaster) ends and that their needs should be incorporated in peacebuilding (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2010). The incorporation of the needs of displaced populations into the UN peacebuilding framework – at least on paper – was an important development and, as such, some aspects of the document deserve closer reading.

29 Note that there is no mention of staying in the location of displacement.

The first aspect of this document, which deserves to be highlighted here, is that a third option is added to the list of possibilities for IDPs after the end of conflict: local integration. This refers to integration in the area where the person took refuge (IASC, 2010). This is especially relevant for the current research because it raises a crucial question in relation to the population that remained in Pabo after the war: have they integrated locally or are they still displaced?

In an attempt to answer the question of when displacement can be considered over, or 'resolved,' the document speaks of 'durable solutions.' Following the document's guidelines: '[a] durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement' (ibid., p. A1). This is relevant for the current research as it can be argued that it is hard to disentangle which needs would still be 'related to their displacement.' As will become visible throughout the stories in this book, anything and everything in these people's current lives – even over a decade after the end of the conflict and nine years after the official closing of the camp – is related to their experience of displacement. A counterfactual can thus hardly be imagined.

A further salient point is made in this policy paper. It states that the national government should be the main actor in achieving solutions for the displacement situation. This, however, is problematic for governments that have experienced civil war or natural disaster; many of these countries do not have sufficient resources or capacity to manage these resources effectively, meaning that IDPs do not receive appropriate assistance. This point is relevant to the current case, since, as argued in the previous chapter, the government played an active role in the displacement of many people and in the maintenance of a north-south divide in the country. As such, it can be wondered how willing the government would be to devote its resources to the reconstruction of Acholi society and the long-term needs of those who were displaced.

A final important point that is made in the document is that 'IDPs are in a position to make an informed and voluntary decision on the durable solution they would like to pursue' (ibid., p. A3). Whereas it is important to acknowledge the element of individual will and agency, the real-life situation is less cut and dried. In fact, it is difficult to determine when a decision is 'informed' and 'voluntary' or even whether a decision is a real decision at all.

As will be seen in the upcoming personal stories, many factors come into play when people have to rebuild their life after war, and not everything they end up doing has been a conscious decision – let alone an informed and voluntary one. Drawing these lines is incredibly complicated and also reveals the particular difficulties of a given conflict and context.

Overall, therefore, it seems clear that there are issues with this document and that there must be room for adjustment to particular situations. Yet, the practical approach to finding durable solutions has also been criticized for leaving gaps (O'Neill, 2009). I will focus on the practical case of displacement in Uganda in the next section in order to emphasize some of the dynamics and shortcomings of the response to displacement. In the end, however, it must also be acknowledged that it is an important first step that the UN has started to engage with the plight of IDPs, also in a post-conflict context. As the UN is a large organization, development is gradual, but the impact of this development can, in the long run, be great.

The political framework in Uganda

In this section, I will zoom in on the particular situation of displacement in Uganda during and after the country's civil war, before returning to larger conceptual debates in the next section of this chapter. In the previous chapter, I have already discussed the large numbers of displaced people and highlighted the dire situation in the displacement camps in northern Uganda. In the current section, I will delve deeper into this and make the argument that the forced encampment of up to 80 per cent of the Acholi population was a form of structural violence (as defined by Johan Galtung (1969)). In this context, I will discuss the response of the international community and the Ugandan government to the displacement crisis. Given that Galtung saw structural violence as a barrier to positive peace, this section further contributes to an understanding of how displacement relates to the study of war and peace. Additionally, it further illuminates why displacement can have such far-reaching and long-lasting consequences, and how the (inter) national response often remains superficial.

Encampment and structural violence

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 1.84 million people were displaced into 251 camps across the north of Uganda at the peak of displacement in 2005 (UNHCR, 2012). Whereas a number of these people moved to the camps because of the threat posed by the LRA, another group was forced

to move by the government army. The official reason given was that it would guarantee the security of the Ugandan civilians.

Yet, other explanations can be offered. One explanation could be that the government wanted the population to move to the camps in order to 'drain the sea.' This term was originally coined in reference to a counter-insurgency strategy that involves the mass killing of civilians by a government in order to remove a guerilla group's support base (see Valentino, Huth, & Balch-Lindsay, 2004). In the case of forced encampment in Uganda, it could be hypothesized that the government pursued this policy in order to drain the LRA's support base without directly killing the civilians. Another perspective is offered by those examining the policy from the perspective of the country's north-south divide, which has also been discussed in the previous chapter; they posit that the encampment and resulting death of many Acholi people were acts of revenge by the NRM/A on the people of the north for crimes committed by Obote's army (which also comprised Acholi people) in the Luwero triangle[30] when Museveni's guerilla movement fought the Obote government (Finnström, 2008). Others note that the Acholi would be too strong and might challenge the president's power at some point if left unchecked; the forced encampment (and the civil war in general) were a way of weakening the Acholi and any threat they might pose. Whether or not this is a conspiracy theory cannot be directly determined. However, this idea also prevailed among some of the people I interviewed, and goes some way to illustrate the ongoing distrust between the Acholi people and the NRM government.

Whatever the motivation behind the policy, however, the result was a humanitarian crisis of incredible magnitude. I believe the enforced encampment and its long-term effects, as elaborated on in the upcoming empirical chapters, are best understood in terms of structural violence. The term 'structural violence' was coined by Johan Galtung in 1969 and further elaborated on in subsequent work. Galtung broadly defined violence as 'avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible' (Galtung, 1990, p. 292). In the case of structural violence, there are repressive structures in place, which are upheld by concerted actions of human beings – frequently a more powerful class (Galtung, 1969). These repressive structures cause a

30 The 'Luwero triangle' is an area north of Kampala and the location of the Bush war fought between Museveni's NRA/M and the Obote government between 1981 and 1986 (Finnström, 2008).

gap between potential and actual needs satisfaction. In concrete terms, Galtung (1990) proposed the following classes of needs: '*survival needs* (negation: death, mortality); *well-being needs* (negation: misery, morbidity); *identity, meaning needs* (negation: alienation); and *freedom needs* (negation: repression)' (ibid., p. 292, italics in original). As Galtung also emphasized, structural violence kills 'slowly, and undramatically' as compared to direct (personal) violence (ibid.).

In the case of the displacement camps in Uganda, it can be seen that all the identified needs were negated. In the context of the camps, many people died because of direct violence by both the UPDF and the LRA – even though the government had promised that the people would be safe inside the IDP camps.[31] Additionally, many people died of illnesses that could have been prevented or cured, had the camps not been so congested. People's well-being and identity/meaning needs were restricted by a lack of education and freedom to express culture and maintain traditions. Repression was also widespread, as people were not allowed to leave the camp and therefore became completely dependent on the delivery of aid for their survival.

Even though the Ugandan government received little critique at the time – indeed, most scrutiny focused on the horrific acts of direct violence by the LRA – some scholars[32] have commented on the situation in the camps in similar terms. Finnström (2003), who did research rather early on in the war, described the camps in terms of 'enforced domination' (p. 197) and argued that because the Ugandan government was controlling all aspects of everyday life, people would feel that their agency was in the hands of others (p. 182;198). It is exactly this control over people's movement, survival, and food security that he, resting on Galtung's (1969) theory, classified as violence.

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31 Dolan (2009) described this violence by the UPDF as a 'double violation'. As an extension of the state, the UPDF was supposed to protect civilians rather than abuse those subjected to them.

32 As a logical consequence of security risks and the need for the protection of the refugees' rights, little academic research was conducted in the camps during the war. This is unfortunate, but also a fact that is common in war studies. The studies that are available are often focused on issues of health, and sometimes on trauma and counseling. Additionally, various NGOs as well as UN bodies have conducted studies comprising practical information on the camps. Aside from this, there are three works (Finnström (2003), Branch (2011), and Dolan (2009)) by authors who visited some of the camps during the war. As may be clear, I draw extensively from these books. The elements I deemed important are chosen because of their resonance with the stories recounted by my informants, who experienced life in Pabo IDP camp.

Dolan (2009) and Branch (2011) took an even stronger position on this issue. Dolan argued that the government of Uganda had no interest in swiftly ending the civil war and that its policy of forced displacement was aimed at breaking the spirit of the Acholi – thus concurring with the north-south-divide theory postulated above. He called the camps debilitating and humiliating and, overall, classified the treatment of the Acholi as social torture. He also added that it was not only the Ugandan government that was responsible for this torture, but that the many NGOs and other relief organizations that were involved in the crisis response actually perpetuated it. Branch (2011) strongly supported the latter conclusion, also arguing that humanitarianism ended up in a sustained collaboration with state violence. Even though I do not agree with all Branch's observations and solutions – a topic that is beyond the immediate scope of this book – he does make the important point that there is often a 'paradox of human rights intervention' (p. 6) when such interventions might undermine people's political agency or unintentionally prolong and intensify conflict and violence.

It is important to be critical of the role of international organizations in the context of displacement and to evaluate how their involvement might affect people on the ground. This topic will recur in the upcoming section 'Universalism, dehistoricization, and the silencing of the displaced,' as I focus more on the discourse surrounding displacement. This discussion of structural violence should provide insight into the detrimental effects displacement has had on the individuals who have experienced it. Before returning to macro-discourses, I would like to take a moment to review the 'post-conflict' policies in place in Uganda to deal with displacement in the wake of the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

The response to Uganda's displaced

During the civil war, the UN was indeed active in northern Uganda, as UNHCR set up and administered the 251 displacement camps, and another UN body, the World Food Program (WPF) supplied food to the camps. This was already fairly unusual; indeed, in 2006, UNHCR wrote in its Statistical Yearbook that 'UNHCR does not have a global mandate to protect or assist all IDPs' (p. 31). However, the UN was quick to withdraw from the situation following the signing of the CHA in 2006. UNHCR's budget for IDPs in Uganda decreased (UNHCR, 2011[33]), and after a little over five years, the

33 Also interesting here is that the budget for refugees in northern Uganda is much larger than the budget for IDPs.

organization declared that 'almost all' IDPs had 'returned' and that its offices in northern Uganda could be closed and all remaining tasks handed over to the national government (UNHCR, 2012).

The Ugandan government promised to pick up where the UNHCR had left off and to forge policies to respond to internal displacement and foster durable solutions. The main document for this was the government's two-phased Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda [PRDP] – a broader plan that, according to President Museveni, aimed to 'eradicate poverty and improve the welfare of the populace in Northern Uganda' as this region had 'consistently fallen behind the rest of the country within the realm of human development' (Republic of Uganda, 2007, p. iii).

In the first phase of the PRDP (aimed for the period 2007-2010), IDPs were given specific consideration in a section on the return and resettlement of IDPs (Republic of Uganda, 2007). In this plan, three different options were imagined for the IDPs: return to home communities; resettlement elsewhere; and integration at the site of displacement. The government estimated that around 30 per cent of the IDPs would not leave the camp site (at least not for the time during which this policy would be effective) and that the other 70 per cent would either return to where they used to live or migrate to another place. The focus of the document continued to lie on this latter 70 per cent, as it was stated that the objective of the policy was to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs from camps to their place of origin or any other location. In order to achieve this, a return kit was promised, including food and household items worth 627,000 Ugandan Shillings that would be received upon arrival in the village. As the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) later noted, most subsequent government policies and practices would also focus on return (IDMC, 2012). The budget for aiding IDPs through this plan was set at over 70 billion Shillings or, at that time, over 39 million US dollars.[34]

The fact that the Ugandan government had come up with a plan for recovery in the north was welcomed by many development actors. Yet, criticism quickly emerged that it was unclear how its goals would be achieved and that there were no specific benchmarks against which success could be

34 This is indeed a lot of money, but if one does the calculations, it turns out that it was nowhere near enough to even provide for the return kits, let alone all other efforts that should be covered by this program. If one assumes that there were approximately 1.8 million IDPs by 2007, and 70 per cent (1.26 million) of them would need a return kit worth 627,000 UGX, this would amount to a total cost of over 790 billion UGX – more than 11 times the budget allotted here.

measured (IDMC, 2008). The start of the program was delayed until mid-2009 due to a lack of funding and oversight mechanisms. Consequently, there was very little positive impact that would enable IDPs to find durable solutions (IDMC, 2012; Miller, 2007). Unfortunately, the second phase of the plan did not improve this situation for those who left the camps or for those who were still there. In this PRDP, which was meant to run from 2012 until 2015, the specific group of (former) IDPs had vanished. Their needs were now categorized under immediate post-conflict and emergency activities – something that was considered to be no longer necessary. Claiming that 'almost all displaced people ha[d] resettled' (Republic of Uganda, 2011, p. 5), the second phase would now continue to focus on further economic recovery.

Despite the slow start of the PRDP and its subsequent problems, people did gradually start to move out of the camps. According to the IDMC, by early 2008 about half of the more than 1.8 million IDPs had left the larger camps for either transit camps or a return to their villages of origin (IDMC, 2008). These transit camps were usually fairly close to the IDP camps, but were smaller and used as a halfway house solution for IDPs to move to before returning to the villages they had fled from. It must be noted, however, that in the region where displacement was highest – i.e. the Acholi sub-region – 59 per cent of the IDP population still remained in camps in 2008 (ibid.).

Two years later, 1.16 million IDPs had moved back to their villages of origin (UNHCR, as cited in IDMC, 2010). By November 2010, a total of 229 camps had been closed, leaving 14 camps in use, of which 13 were located in the Acholi sub-region (ibid.). Again two years later, the 'overwhelming majority' of IDPs was said to have returned, leaving approximately 30,000 people still in the sites of the camps, even though most of these had already closed (IDMC, 2012). By the end of 2011, UNHCR decided to close its offices in northern Uganda. Additionally, all humanitarian coordination functions had been handed over to the government, and protection of IDPs was now in the hands of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (ibid.).

As all these organizations as well as the majority of NGOs that had arrived in the area during the war left the country, and the government initiated the second phase of its recovery plan, it was assumed that the crisis was over, that 'development' could now begin, and that IDPs or former IDPs were no longer a concern. But did the departure of these organizations also mean that the 1.8 million people who had lived in displacement camps for over a decade had now found a 'sustainable solution'? And, specifically pertinent to this research, what about the people who remained, who never left their site of

displacement? The IDMC continues to indicate that there are 30,000 people internally displaced as a remnant of the LRA war (IDMC (2018a), data runs up to 2016) even though all the camps have officially closed. Unfortunately, it is unclear who the IDMC counted in this number and for what reason.

What can be concluded in the case of Uganda is that IDPs were not a major concern in the long-term peacebuilding process. Yet, considering the nature of the war in Uganda, it should have been. Civilians were the main target of both non-state and state violence, and their rehabilitation and healing should therefore have been at the center of any effort to foster a positive peace. Given that the UN as well as many NGOs were quick to leave, it can be argued that (formerly) displaced people were easily forgotten once a 'post-conflict' situation was declared. This is especially disturbing if we accept Branch's (2011) notion that these organizations were actually intricately involved in sustaining structural violence. Still, success was claimed by simply citing the number of people who had left the sites of the former displacement camps. As this book will show, however, such statistics are often void of any substance; they do not answer questions about either the people who left or the people who stayed, nor do they allow for an insight into the experience of displacement and its aftermath, including people's incredibly and inevitably qualitatively different experiences.

Universalism, dehistoricization, and the silencing of the displaced

The information presented above is largely based on policy documents that were published by agencies in charge of 'dealing with' internally displaced people and refugees. What is remarkable about many of the documents published by these organizations is that they use a humanitarian language that aims to be universal in its scope. The reason for the usage of this language is that humanitarian aid as well as efforts at fostering peace have traditionally been defined as something that should be apolitical in nature; no sides should be chosen in this endeavor, as this would go against state sovereignty and might interfere with the imperative to help (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

While the intention is praiseworthy, not least because it is indeed civilians who are the main victims of civil war, there are also downsides. Importantly, the depoliticization of the issue of displacement has effectively led to the construction of an ahistorical, universal human subject. As Malkki (1996) argued, the large bureaucracies surrounding relief efforts of humanitarian interventions have exacerbated this tendency. Malkki (1996) was writing

specifically about refugees, but I believe her words also resonate with the discourse and practice surrounding internally displaced persons when she argued the following:

> […] one important effect of the bureaucratized humanitarian interventions that are set in motion by large population displacements is to leach out the histories and the politics of specific refugees' circumstances. Refugees stop being specific persons and become pure victims in general […] (p. 378).

To illustrate the argument that much of the public discourse is impersonal, it is useful to look at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC). The IDMC claims to be 'the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement' and states its aims as 'informing policy and operational decisions that can reduce the risk of future displacement and improve the lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide' (acquired from the IDMC homepage, 2018b). Yet, when one looks at how the IDMC collects its data, it is clear that there is an over-reliance on the collection of quantitative data that does not need any input from the displaced people themselves: they 'collect data on the age, sex and location of internally displaced people, as well as their shelter type and the duration of their displacement' (IDMC, 2018c). By linking this, in their mission, to the aim of improving the lives of IDPs worldwide, the IDMC suggests that displaced people all over the globe have comparable (if not the same) experiences; that there is something like a single 'IDP experience'.

The latter idea was theorized by Malkki (1995), again in relation to refugees but resonating with IDPs as well. Malkki argued that the discourse of a universal 'refugee experience' is disabling, because very mobile, unstable social phenomena become essential traits of individuals. As she put it:

> [a]lmost like an essentialized anthropological "tribe," refugees thus become not just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status; they become "a culture," "an identity" […], "a social world" […], or "a community" […]. (p. 511).

As argued in the above section on the UN's approach to IDPs, the UN's statements on sustainable solutions seem to be far removed from lived experience. Importantly, there is no room in these approaches for the voice of the refugees or internally displaced people themselves; their gender and age are reported, but not their specific experiences, problems, and victories. Additionally, there is often a focus on the physical wounds and needs of

people who have been displaced. In UN reports and in news segments, a clinical approach often takes over, where numbers, diseases, and nutritional needs are rapidly summed up. Through this focus, an ideal construct emerges of what it means to be displaced (Malkki, 1996). This construct is one of a helpless victim, someone who is tragic and sometimes even repulsive and can only be helped by experts (ibid.). Someone who is displaced is thus reduced to an anonymous body, unable to speak for herself.

These policy-related documents are not the only documents that obscure the voice of displaced people. The same occurs in academia and the media. It is almost unnecessary to make the case for the latter, as the images of refugee- and IDP camps crammed with thousands of people and huts are all too familiar, as well as the image of the 'African child' with a bloated belly and flies in his eyes. In terms of academia, it appears that especially medical- and political scientists are active when it comes to publishing on the circumstances in refugee camps, and in the writings of both there is a heavy focus on quantitative data and statistical analysis. Even in the books by Dolan (2009) and Branch (2011), which were very influential in their critical approach towards the treatment of the internally displaced population in Uganda, the main source is frequently the officials in the camps rather than the people who were living the realities of displacement. It must also be noted, however, that Finnström's books (2003, 2008) are an important example of the opposite. As a trained anthropologist, he mainly spoke to people who were dealing with the realities of war and displacement, and highlighted their specific coping mechanisms. The point here is that the incorporation of different methods and different perspectives can have much added value in the research into displacement.

This is not to say that the work done in academia and by the UN and other organizations is useless. Indeed, the alternative of no attention for the issue would be much worse. But precisely because of the importance of their work, the approach deserves critical attention. The quantitative and universalist approach has the benefit of putting a problem on the (global) political agenda and of making problems regarding displacement seem less complex and thus less of an insurmountable task. This is a distinct advantage in a world where everything moves quickly and there is never only one crisis at a time.

Yet, the argument above shows that there are also important downsides. People with histories, political opinions, and various life experiences are reduced to one universal, anonymous victim and subject. And, as a subject, there is no voice for these people; 'their accounts are disqualified almost a

priori, while the languages of refugee relief, policy science, and "development" claim the production of authoritative narratives about the[m].' (Malkki, 1996, p. 386). Additionally, looking only at numbers can deform the realities of a post-conflict context, as a situation of displacement is rapidly seen as 'resolved' when numbers of people in displacement camps decrease. Yet, moving from one place to another hardly seems a solution to many of the challenges people are facing in this context.

It seems that different trends come together when it comes to the silencing of the displaced. It is possible that part of this lies in the nature of displacement: it is born out of crisis and thus a crisis response ensues. Within the framework of humanitarian aid, however, academia, the media, and NGOs create a discourse of a universal, helpless victim. Additionally, within the context of humanitarian aid, quantitative approaches that focus on numbers and physical qualities are allowed and even preferred as they, too, have the tendency to generate more support. Thus, when a conflict is declared over, the crisis is over, and the crisis response ends. What is often not sufficiently acknowledged and certainly inadequately supported with the necessary resources is that war leaves deeper scars. It is here that the issue of peacebuilding comes to the fore. But, as discussed earlier, it is hard to gather support for an effort the progress of which is difficult to measure. It is in this scenario that I argue that there is a need to hear the voices of displaced persons themselves and to acknowledge that displacement affects people beyond the period of war. I thus emphasize the need for interdisciplinarity, as dealing with displacement and engaging in peacebuilding are inherent to the disciplines of political science and development, but methods from other disciplines might be more suited to fighting the universalism and anonymity that is prominent in much of the discourse surrounding the topic.

Broadening the scope

Having elaborated on the broader political framework in which displacement can be located, and having critically discussed the discourse that surrounds it, I will now engage with some important topics that might help to counter the issues discussed in the previous section. As a starting point, it is held that people who were displaced during civil wars face ongoing challenges, even after the war officially ended, and that these challenges are context-dependent. In this section, I elaborate on two dimensions that will be used in this book to contextualize and make more sense of people's experiences

within a setting of (past) displacement. These are the broad categories of time and space.

These categories are inspired by the Chicago School. The Chicago School is a school of thought within sociology that developed during the 1920s and 1930s. Some aspects of the ideas of this school, I believe, are still relevant today and are useful in pursuing interdisciplinarity in this particular case. As Abbott (1997) summarized: 'In a single sentence, the Chicago School thought – and thinks – that one cannot understand social life without understanding the arrangements of particular social actors in particular social times and places […] Chicago felt that no social fact makes sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space and social time' (p. 1152). Particular to the topic of this book, it is held that taking an individual's experience of time and space into consideration helps to humanize the issue of displacement and to better understand the situation these people find themselves in. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the topics of time and space as they relate to the topic of displacement. This will provide some orientation for this book and a justification for the specific methods used, including an ethnographic methodology, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Of time: Historicity and storytelling

Time is the first line along which contextualization can take place. It may seem redundant to point out that people exist within time, that they have their own past, present, and imagined future, but when a person is portrayed solely as a victim, one part of someone's past is considered relevant. This is not only unfair to the person who has been displaced, but it also does not help to understand someone's situation or to think of possible ways forward. For this reason, it is important to place someone in a multidimensional web of time, to accept the ontological assumption that social life exists in flow (Born, 2015).

One layer of this is a broader historical context. In the case of wartime displacement, forced migration is the result of historical large-scale processes (Malkki, 1995). The specifics of these processes vary for different conflicts, and the particularities of a conflict and the background against which a conflict took place will shape the form and experience of displacement as well. It is not only political history that is important, the social history of the group that someone is a part of is also important. In this case, the history of the Acholi people is something that is remembered and continuously

reconstructed. This history plays an important part in how people live their lives and how they interpret what happens to them.

It is against the backdrop of these grand structures that we must place the issue of personal history. Every individual has had different life experiences – even though many can be compared, and parallels can be drawn. This individual history inevitably combines with someone's broader social background and, consequently, affects a person's interpretation of the present, ideas about the future, and therefore decision-making processes. In this sense, 'temporality and historicity are not opposed but rather merge in the experience of those who, in their activities, carry forward the process of social life' (Ingold, 1993, p. 157). Acknowledging this is a way of acknowledging agency and individuality, thus countering universalist ideas.

That it is important to focus on history and time in a broader sense, does not mean that the specific experience of displacement does not deserve explicit attention. Forced displacement constitutes a rupture: it entails change and often loss for a person (Eastmond, 2007). Yet, it cannot be assumed a priori what these are, what they mean, and how they are best coped with (ibid.). Wily put it more positively (2009, as cited in Joireman Sawyer, & Wilhoit, 2012, p. 199): '[…] people cannot be expected to endure or participate in the horrors of war, leaving their homes, sometimes for a decade or more, and not develop marked new awareness, skills and aspirations.' It is this way that displacement affects people, changes them in particular ways, that deserves attention.

Finally, there is the practical aspect of what constitutes a 'good future'. Even though this is a very difficult question to ask, it is an inevitable one if one accepts that ending displacement is inherent to the peacebuilding effort. Again, people's experiences and broader background will influence the answer to this. Undeniably, this is also a question that people working within the field of humanitarian aid or peacebuilding should ask; if you want to engage in meaningful peacebuilding, it must match people's desires for the future. In this sense, it cannot be assumed that it is known what the outcome of peacebuilding should be, and neither should we fall for the idea that the current approach to peacebuilding is itself timeless, unchangeable, and absolute. Rather, it is also rooted in a history of politics, law, colonialism, diplomacy, and many other factors (Malkki, 1996). This certainly does not make peacebuilding any easier, nor does it provide any direct pointers on where to start or what approach to adhere to. The only practical indication this gives is that peacebuilding is not a one-size-fits-all engagement; it should

be flexible, adaptable to local and individual context, and take into account local history as well as the displaced person's life experiences.

Importantly, when one accepts all the arguments above, it also becomes clear that the voices and stories of individuals are important. In storytelling, time inevitably plays a role, as stories give meaning to the present, but also represent the complicated nature of people's relationship to time (Bruner, 1997). As Bruner (1997) put it: 'On the one hand, a story is experienced as a sequence, as it is being told or enacted; on the other hand, it is comprehended all at once – before, during, and after the telling. A story is static and dynamic at the same time' (p. 277). I will return to this issue in the next chapter, but it is important to understand how these arguments link up with the methodology that was chosen for this research.

Of space: (De)territorialization, home, and belonging

In this section, I will discuss the other line along which the contextualization of the lived experience of displaced persons occurs, i.e. space. In this section, I will consider two sorts of space. The first can perhaps more accurately be referred to as geographical place. In relation to this, I will specifically discuss the relationship between geographical points on the map and sentiments that people attach to them. Considering this is part of developing a framework for understanding the long-term implications of displacement. The second aspect of space refers to social spaces. This refers to one's social world and different networks of social relationships that one can navigate. Social space can, in some cases, be related to geographical place, but it can also be separate from this. It will become clear in the upcoming discussion that both geographical place and social space relate to the concept of 'home' and that ideas about home are central to a better understanding of the varying experiences of displacement. The aim of this section is not to give definitions or to give definite answers to questions such as what it means to be home, but rather to problematize certain notions that are taken for granted and to raise more questions along the lines of which we can think about displacement.

The importance of geographical place

Much of (inter)national policy regarding refugees and internally displaced persons is based on the idea that people attach value to a certain geographical location, to a country, or to a specific city or village. Until approximately the end of the Cold War, it was generally assumed that refugees as well as internally displaced persons would want to return home to one specific geographical

place (Warner, 1994). Later, however, both the terms 'return' and 'home' were heavily debated:[35] it was questioned what it means for different individuals to be 'home' and whether, after being gone for a long time, there is anything to 're'-turn to (Black & Gent, 2006; Kabachnik, Regulska, & Mitchneck, 2010; Stefansson, 2006; Warner, 1994). Furthermore, on a more practical level, it was questioned whether all displaced people even want to return at all (Joireman et al., 2012).

The presupposition of the importance of geographical place is interesting, and reveals something about the underlying assumptions of many observers and policymakers. In a crucial way, it has become natural to link geography with identity. This is especially the case when it comes to countries and national identity, but it also happened on a smaller scale, as specific peoples and cultures were seen to belong to a specific land.[36] As space and place are generally conceptualized as having to do with break, rupture, and disjunction, and territories seen as discretely separated, cultures and people are also often seen as discretely separated (Malkki, 1992). Observers often attempt to catch much of the fluidity of culture, identity, and inclusion into different groups in rigid categorizations that make sense to the outside observer and that lend themselves to the type of universal policymaking discussed in the previous sections of this chapter.

As Malkki (1992) argued, rootedness in the soil – in the sense of having one's identity and culture tied to geographical place – comes naturally to sedentary peoples, and sedentarism has been taken for granted to such an extent that it has become nearly invisible. Yet, it determines how the world is seen, and specifically also how displacement is conceptualized and acted upon – especially as much of the policy relating to displacement is influenced by (sedentary) people from the West. What is even more important here is that as people who had to flee their homes due to a disaster are considered displaced, they are also often assumed to have lost their culture, their identity, by being 'uprooted' from a specific locality. Considering this emphasis on the link between identity and geographical place, it seems only natural that someone who has been displaced has to return as soon as possible to the locality he or she came from – and that this would constitute a satisfying solution to all problems.

35 Considering that academic literature in many fields is Western-centric (both in terms of authors and of topics), it comes as no surprise that the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent policy response featured heavily as a case for academics, and that these issues were analysed in this context.

36 See Appadurai (1988) for a critique on the confinement of 'the native'.

At this point, it should be noted that it is essential to be critical of underlying assumptions without dismissing them completely. As acknowledged by Malkki as well as other authors (Kabachnik et al., 2010; Kibreab, 1999), certain places do indeed hold particular meaning, and place can be instrumental in the construction of identity – also in diasporas. Place can also be important in the practicing of religion, as places such as Mecca and Jerusalem illustrate, and of culture. Hence a specific place can be turned into a 'ceremonial landscape', thus giving a specific geographical place a social meaning (Mather, 2003). In this sense, the practice of culture can be affected by displacement, as, in the process, locality as well as people are lost. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that culture or identity is wiped out – rather, the practice of culture can change.

Finally, it has been argued that there can also be a process of 'reterritorialization' in different periods of time. This can take place during the time of displacement, as a new community is constructed in the camp, or it can happen when one decides to leave the site of displacement or even if one decides to stay (Brun, 2001). Indeed, life does not stop when one is displaced, and it is important to acknowledge that people do move on and build futures (Brun, 2015).

The discussion above shows that is not useful to take the link between place and identity for granted or to completely deny the possibility of this link. There are too many differences between groups of people and between individuals. Additionally, people's attachment to places can change over time. In this sense, it needs to be realized that '[t]o plot only "places of birth" and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them' (Malkki, 1992, p. 38). Understanding the specific ways in which geographical place is tied to (and made instrumental in) identity and belonging for a specific group of people or individuals is crucial in understanding displacement and in the effort to steer away from universalist approaches.

. *Social space, home, and 're'-turn*

Transcending the idea of geographical place is the idea of social space. Social space is based on the relationships between people rather than on a specific place. This does not mean, however, that social space is something that only exists in the imagination. It does require the physical meeting of different people – yet the specific place is not the main concern. Examples of social space can be the family, the household, or a group of friends. When these people come together, a social space is created. The idea of a social space

implies some sort of synergy; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is important to recognize that people exist in and navigate between a range of social spaces on a daily basis. As someone moves between social spaces, she takes on different roles and assumes different values or modes of behaviour.

In the case of displacement, 'home' becomes the centerstage of much of the discussion. Home can be seen by some as a specific geographical location, but it can also be seen as an important social space. One that, for that matter, often implies belonging and contributes to someone's sense of identity. Clearly, strong emotions and memories can be attached to the concept of home (Kabacknik et al., 2010). As such, it is a concrete example of how place, social space, and even temporality come together.

In the latter sense, the memory of home can have an important effect on the experience of displacement (Kabachnik et al., 2010). It can become something someone comes from and wants to return to, or it can become the destiny of an ideal future (ibid.). Importantly, home often becomes an imagined location, especially in situations of protracted displacement. As such, it can be questioned whether there is anything to 're'-turn to. As Warner (1994) also argued, displaced individuals as well as their home communities will have changed during the time people have been gone. As such, 'going home' as a 'return' to something might hardly be possible.

Overall, it is important to reflect critically on the different meanings that can be attached to being (at) home and how they relate to geographical place and social space in different contexts and for different people. These questions are not easy to answer, but in the light of these answers, a clearer picture can emerge of how people experience displacement and also of how displacement can end.

Conclusion

This chapter started with a consideration of the place of displacement in peacebuilding and engaged with the concepts of structural violence and positive peace. Through critical reflection on policy and discourse surrounding the topic of displacement, it has been concluded that a more context-sensitive approach is needed in the study of displacement and its long-term effects. To this end, I have suggested using the broad categories of time and space. Within this, however, it has become clear that time, space, and place form a blurry web. It is within this blurry web that realities form, but it is also clear that completely disentangling this web is impossible.

As such, it is not the aim to wander in endless specificities, but rather to highlight some important aspects and to call for an approach that locates the humanity of people at the center, also in those cases when they have experienced inhumane conditions.

In the current study, an interdisciplinary approach is taken in order to take some initial steps in contextualizing the experience of displacement for some people in northern Uganda and to counter universalist ideas. This research started with the question of why people did not leave their site of displacement after the end of the country's civil war. This was intended as an open question, geared toward exploring people's attachments to geographical place and social space, but inevitably ended up deeply entangled in other issues as well. By including the issue of time, remembering and imagination also become important, thus allowing for the exploration of change and of multiple angles of identity, culture, belonging, and home. By problematizing the essentialist connotations of geographical place, there is more room for understanding mobility in the northern Ugandan context and for getting a better grip on what it means for a person to be forced to move from one place to another.

Whereas the first empirical chapter will focus more on geographical place, the second chapter will focus more on social space; specifically, marriage and the family have been chosen as the social space for consideration. The issue of time is woven throughout the book in various ways. Firstly, it is at the core of the methodological choice to collect life histories. Furthermore, linking displacement to concepts such as peacebuilding, structural violence, and positive peace, allows for an exploration of how the past plays a role in the present as well as in the future. Finally, time is omnipresent because many of the topics that will be discussed have to do with change – and change inevitably happens over time.

Photo 6
Roundhouses in Pabo

4 Methodology and methods

Without stories, without listening to one another's stories,
there can be no recovery of the social, no overcoming of our separateness,
no discovery of common ground or common cause.
(Jackson, 2002a)

In this chapter, I will introduce the methods and methodologies used during the fieldwork as well as the eventual writing of this book. It functions as a roadmap to understanding how I obtained the data that I will present in the two following chapters and what influenced my interpretation of it. This chapter is two-sided, containing a technical and an emotional part. On the one hand, it is about what I did and the theoretical grounds for these methodological choices. I will elaborate on why I chose to gather life histories through open-ended interviews in this small town in Uganda called Pabo. On the other hand, it is about reflection – about my role as a researcher and about the intricacies of human interaction. As an added bonus, it is a way of reminiscing – about a time of brown and green, of round houses, and goats on anthills.

Interdisciplinarity and methodology

From the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, it is clear that the current research project is interdisciplinary in nature. The interest in the topic arose from a concern with the political, and the background provided in the second chapter was also largely based on an analysis of the situation from a political angle. From here, however, it became increasingly clear that the purely political analysis of issues such as war, displacement, and (re)integration meant that, all too often, dehumanization takes place; people are reduced to abbreviations and numbers and moved from one theoretical 'box' into another. In this endeavor, there is little space and time for nuances, deep understanding, and reflection – both in the area of research and of policymaking. Talking about social sciences in general, Roberts (2002) argued: '[…] modern social sciences have tended to omit the 'humanity' of the individual in the pursuit of causal accounts, objective study of the general

patterns of human behaviour and standard features of individuals' (p. 4). This was something I wanted to do differently in this research.

I realized that empathy and humanity rather than rigidity and anonymity were needed to make the findings more meaningful, also in the context of academia. As such, I started to see the value of ethnographic methods, as these stimulate one to take a qualitative approach and to look at the individual as well as the structures that surround her. Additionally, the branch of critical ethnography allows for the acknowledgement of the role of the researcher and the role emotions play in research (see also Gilbert (2000)). Subsequently, during the phase of analysis of the stories I had collected, I was drawn to sociology and its theories. This discipline has long focused on the behaviour of certain groups within society and also particularly on 'deviant behaviour'; it focuses more on the question of how people treat each other and what their reasons for doing so might be. I decided that the latter is indeed of paramount importance, also in the context I aimed to study.

As such, a political problem has been studied using ethnographic methods and analysed partly from a sociological perspective. It is in the final version that is presented here that it can sometimes still be sensed that I – as someone who was trained as a political scientist and new to the practice of ethnographic fieldwork research – am struggling to unite the values of all three disciplines and my own experience in them. As said before, the aim is to show the human face of these people who were previously considered a 'political problem' but who have now, in their so-called post-conflict context, largely been forgotten — but, it is also my aim to remain methodologically rigorous and in touch with the realities of politics. For this reason, this chapter will emphasize the uniting force of the underlying constructivist epistemology and outline the methods used as well as the potential pitfalls.

Critical ethnography and epistemological assumptions

The tools used during the fieldwork research came from the toolbox of critical ethnography. According to Cunliffe (2010), ethnography is about micro-level interactions and patterns of life in society. It is about temporality and context. Temporality is important in the sense that the social is always in flux; it is everchanging. As Cunliffe put it, ethnography is about 'meanings, social processes, continuities, and discontinuities across the past and the present' (p. 229). To this, I would like to add that it is also about people's imagined futures, as one's past, present, and imagined future determine their behaviour. In ethnography, the researcher is thus encouraged to capture

more than one image of a person or social group. In this sense, ethnography is also about thick description and, according to Cunliffe, the telling of tales. It is in the telling of tales, in these 'messy texts' (p. 231), that the validity of ethnographic work lies.

Additionally, it is assumed that in order to acquire knowledge about patterns of life of other people, it is important to engage with them in their own environment (Jackson, 2002a). Doing this can help to grasp the 'complexity, intricacy, and mundanity' of people's lives (Cunliffe, 2010, p. 299), which are all crucial in ethnographic understanding. Through this interaction with people on their own turf and by carefully observing the new world that you are encountering in your research, the goal of ethnographic work can be fulfilled, namely to tell a 'convincing story using the language of community members and by weaving observations and insights about culture and practice into the text' (ibid., p. 228).

The fact that ethnography requires interaction points to the importance of intersubjectivity. This is two-layered. The first is related to the relationship between the researcher and the participant: in modern ethnography, the subject-object split that is generally observed in natural science is eliminated and replaced with an intersubjective model of understanding (Jackson, 2002a). In this sense, it becomes important for the researcher to reflect on his or her own role in the research. This is based on the belief that the researcher's own frame of reference, background, and behaviour have influenced the research in fundamental ways, and that it is important to reflect on this and to be explicit about this in one's description of methodology and methods as well as throughout one's text. This approach to ethnography has been termed reflexive or interpretive ethnography (see also Van Maanen (2011)). Indeed, I believe this intellectual effort is of crucial importance and that denying the researcher's own influence makes (social) research less credible. For this reason, I will reflect on my own influence throughout this book and specifically in this chapter's section on 'The Encounter'.

The second layer that I would like to refer to lays beneath the intersubjectivity between the researcher and the participant mentioned above. Namely, it regards the interaction and intersubjectivity between the person you are interviewing and other people in his or her life. Taking this into consideration says much about the underlying epistemological assumptions of this research. At its core, the epistemology of this research is constructivist in nature. It is based on the idea that reality is socially constructed; meanings are shaped and reshaped through social interactions, and humans act on the basis of

the meaning of things (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2010). What is studied in this research therefore is the outcome of social interactions among people in Pabo and anyone or anything they ever encountered. Moreover, the way of studying these outcomes is through social interaction and thus through the creation of meaning between the researcher and the interviewee.

The emphasis on social interaction as a basis for knowledge and action also has implications for the concern with truth and reality. I hold that what is true and what is real for the people I engaged with for this research, is not true and real for all of them. Importantly, this means that even though there might be *a* truth out there – things physically happened, interactions occurred – this social reality cannot be observed or talked about without any interference of perception and personal frameworks.[37] The result is a multitude of meanings and perceived realities – all of which are more or less real and relevant to different people. Moreover, the work I present here is necessarily my interpretation of what I believe comes close to what has been happening in Pabo – based on other people's stories about events they have interpreted. Of course, the constructivist epistemology that I outline here also had an effect on the particular method I chose and on the way in which I subsequently analysed the information I obtained. This will recur throughout this chapter.

Methods

Commencing the research: Shaking knees and a backpack full of cheese

So, here I was. Twenty-three years old and semi-ready to embark on a seven-month fieldwork trip. With shaking knees and a full backpack, I set out for a continent I had only visited the supra-Saharan part of and to a country I had only read about. Here, in Uganda, everything was new and little was familiar. Michael Agar (1996) accurately described the culture shock that I encountered and that, according to him, everyone engaged in ethnography has to deal with when he wrote: 'Suddenly you do not know the rules anymore. You do not know how to interpret the stream of motions and noises that surround you. You have no idea what is expected of you' (as cited in Cunliffe, 2010, p. 235).

37 I believe these ideas come closest to those of 'representative realism' as developed by John Lock and Descartes (Horner & Westacott, 2000).

And that was exactly what Kampala, the country's capital, was to me: an endless stream of motions and noises. The capital's streets were filled with *boda bodas* and potholes. Taxi-bus (*matatu*) drivers would execute crazy maneuvers and the boys hanging from the windows would yell unintelligible things at anyone who looked like they were on their way to some place. I was scared and overwhelmed, but also incredibly excited. As people would tell me: I had 'reached.'[38]

After a few days of acclimatization and sightseeing, I decided it was time to go north. Whereas the stream of motions and noises in Kampala was overwhelming, it was less so in the smaller cities and the villages up north. Here, in Pabo, as I carefully attempted to get an insight into people's lives and gain their trust, it was a different kind of culture shock that took hold. I was thrown for a loop by my lack of cultural grip, which meant that I did not know what behaviours (gestures, body language, words) sent which messages. As Michael Agar accurately continued in his description: 'Many of the assumptions that form the bedrock of your existence are mercilessly ripped out from under you. The more you cling to them, the less you will understand about the people with whom you work' (ibid.).

And so, I started to let go of the old and learn the new. I observed, asked questions, copied. I ate new things, tried new modes of transportation, and met new people. I even started speaking a different kind of English. I also learned about things I did not like and refused to eat certain things or, for example, to kneel for men in the village. Additionally, I made the decision not to live in Pabo and to rather stay in Gulu, a larger town nearby. This was rather true to form for someone who always tries to find the middle ground. Gulu, with its approximately 152,000 inhabitants (according to the 2014 census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014)), was a nice type of busy; there were things to do, places to go out, and people to meet. Unlike in Pabo, there were things that were familiar to me: there was Western food, brick houses, and a supermarket. Additionally, the locals were fairly used to white people. The latter may sound like an odd thing to care about, but even after seven months of walking around in Pabo, people would still come out of their houses to look at me and to 'greet' me from afar, and children would still either come running or fear me. Being in the spotlight like this never ceased to make me uncomfortable.

38 This was a colloquialism that was initially confusing to me (reached where/what?), but I soon found out that it is often used instead of 'arrived'.

I believe the choice to live in Gulu was good for my personal happiness and well-being. The main drawback of my decision not to live in Pabo, however, was academic in nature: I did not 'do ethnography' in the sense of immersing myself into the community I was trying to learn about. Rather, I would visit for the day and try to soak up as much information as possible before returning to Gulu. While this meant that my methods did not involve a high level of participant observation, it did give me an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on my experiences and the information I acquired during each day of fieldwork.

Life (hi)stories

An ethnographic methodology still allows a researcher to use a wide array of methods. In this research, I employed the biographical or life (hi)story method. There are several reasons why I opted for this specific method, and all are intimately related to the issues discussed in the previous chapter.

Most importantly, life histories, if properly contextualized, allow for an exploration of the interaction between agency and structure (Cole & Knowles, 2001). One aspect of this that was specifically to this research is that it allows us to see how politics affect people's lives in concrete terms. Another aspect is that it can provide an individual perspective on culture and look at the interaction between culture and the individual (Goodson, 2001) – something that I return to in Chapter 6.

Another important benefit is that the life history method reveals the perspective of the people who were displaced, rather than look at them from above. As Goodson (2001) put it: '[…] questions will be asked, not from the point of view of the powerful actors but rather from the perspective of those who are *acted on* in professional transactions' (p. 131, emphasis added). This method offers space for the expression of hidden or 'silenced' lives (ibid.), thus giving the topic of displacement a human face and countering the problematic issues with the current discourse discussed in the previous chapter. A key added advantage is that the focus on hidden lives can serve a feminist agenda; only interviewing people who are in the public eye or people who are in powerful positions might provide a male-dominated sample.

Another important observation from the previous chapter was that the passage of time is important. A contextualized life history combines broad historical developments with individual history and allows for a focus on the passing of time and on change. Even though the life history method focuses

on individuals, it can still provide insights into the broader dynamics of a community (Cole & Knowles, 2001). This is not to say that by understanding one, you can understand all, but it does contribute to understanding the complexities of lives in communities. Overall, the life history method confronts messy human subjectivity head-on, rather than sidestepping it, as is so often the case in quantitative research (Goodson, 2001).

Collecting the life histories

The material that underpins this book was collected between March and September 2017. During this period, I met people in their homes in Pabo. All the homes were located within a radius of approximately 5 kilometers from the heart of the trading center (the market). Visiting people in their home allowed them to feel comfortable and in control and also gave me a better insight into their circumstances. The aim of the interviews, as stated at the beginning of each one of them, was to learn about the people living in Pabo and, to this end, to collect life histories.

The initial interviews were unstructured and open-ended so as to let the interviewee guide the proceedings' course and contents . This was very important to me for the current research. Through the unstructured approach, I aimed to minimize my influence on their narratives. I wanted to give the interviewees the space to determine themselves in what order they told their experiences and what topics they deemed important to discuss. Interestingly, this was how the second empirical chapter came into being: marriage, gender relations, alcoholism, and domestic violence were not topics I expected to discuss when I started the project, but these topics continued to surface in conversations and turned out to be extremely relevant and interesting.

As it was my intention to be as non-intrusive as possible, I made use of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method [BNIM]. This method is most elaborately developed by Tom Wengraf (see his Short Guide (2013)), but was subsequently tested and further theorized. The strategy for the first interview is to start with an open, narrative inducing question. This is termed a SQUIN (single question aimed at inducing narrative) and aims to empower the interviewee to construct their narrative on their own terms (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014). In this initial stage, the interests of the researcher are set aside as much as possible (Cardenal, 2016).

In my case, Owot Samuel – my research assistant and translator – had already arranged the interviews beforehand and informed the participants

that a woman would visit who was doing research among people who had moved to Pabo during the time of the civil war but who had not left since. This inevitably revealed some information and pointed to the importance of the experience of displacement. Yet, I specifically did not reveal any further information to either Samuel or to the interviewees regarding the specific research topic. The first question I asked (after shortly introducing myself) was usually a variation along these lines: 'For the current research I am collecting life histories, and I was wondering if you can tell me something about yours. You can start wherever you want, and take as much time as you need. I will listen first and ask questions later.'

The responses to this question were very diverse. Some of the interviewees were very much at ease with the openness of the question and would start their narratives right away. Some could even talk uninterrupted for half an hour or more. Others were very brief or preferred more directive questions. In the latter case, I would ask more direct questions, but it was my intention not to steer the conversation too much initially. It made sense, however, that some felt more comfortable with such an open question than others. In some cases, me having to ask many specific questions meant that it was hard to get the conversation to 'flow'; in other cases it was just a way of warming up. The idea behind starting with a completely open question was to listen to the narrative that developed spontaneously and as an initial reaction to the question (Cardenal, 2016), take notes, and subsequently ask about particular, remembered events. In asking about these events, I was pushing for 'particular incident narratives' (or PINs) by using key phrases regarding topics that were raised by the interviewees themselves (Ross & Moore, 2016). Specifically, I tried to ask them to remember how certain events happened. Asking about events rather than emotions or opinions was often a good starting point. Feelings and opinions would usually become evident anyway, or I would ask about them later.

After the initial unstructured interview, in some cases I would conduct a follow-up interview or multiple follow-ups. These interviews were semi-structured, and contained internal narrative as well as external narrative questions. This meant that I asked more about topics the interviewee him- or herself had brought to the fore in a past interview or that I sometimes also linked this to topics that I specifically wanted to talk about. In practice, however, it turned out that external narrative questions were often easily linked to things we had already discussed before.

Whether or not I would follow up with someone was dependent on two main factors. The first was that the interviewee met the criteria of having moved to Pabo during the war and that he or she had highlighted some points in their story that sparked my interest. The second, and by far most important factor, was the chemistry between the interviewee and me. The latter is indeed very hard to qualify, as it was about the general atmosphere, their and my mood, mutual expectations, and the accompanying willingness to open up. Indeed, in some cases there would be an awkward atmosphere or very little exchange and in some cases capturing stories would be told and trust was developed.

In total, I interviewed 43 people: 20 men and 23 women. As I conducted an additional one or two follow-up interviews with some of the participants, I conducted 65 interviews in total. An overview of the interviews can be found in Appendix 1. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and 3.5 hours. The length of the interview was again dependent on our chemistry. I recorded most interviews – always with permission – but in cases where I felt the person we were visiting would feel more comfortable without the recording device, I would only talk or only take notes. The total of 65 interviews were 'official interviews', and do not include casual encounters such as me visiting their home or having a conversation with someone on the streets.

Of the 43 people I spoke with, two people attended the interview in their official capacity as civil servants. One was the current Local Council leader 1[39] [LC1] and the other was an official who worked specifically on resolving land cases. Finally, I spoke to a man who used to be a Local Council leader 3 and a zonal leader during the time of the camp. In this case, the talk was partly about his experience in these functions and partly about his personal life. The interview with the LC1 was the first one I conducted because, according to Samuel, I had to make myself known to the local leadership in order to avoid questions about what I was doing in Pabo or having to pay bribes. This interview as well as the interview with the specialist on land issues were both semi-structured and focused more on acquiring background information and getting an idea about the context than on their individual experiences.

Overall, however, there was thus a heavy focus on collecting personal life histories from 'ordinary people'. In order for the research to reflect modern-day Pabo as much as possible, it was important to speak with different kinds

39 As mentioned before, the Local Council 1 is the lowest political administrative unit and is responsible for the village. The LC 2 is responsible for the parish, the LC3 for the sub-county, the LC4 for the county, and the LC5 for the district.

of people. I spoke with men and women of different ages. I spoke with people who were born in different villages and with different occupations. Most of the participants identified as Acholi, but three women had a mixed identity as they were born Madi[40] but married Acholi men. The family situation of participants also varied: some were married, some divorced, and some single, and not everyone had children. Some had fought with the LRA and some had not. Who was asked to participate in the research was not based on a mathematical model, randomness, or the like. Rather, Samuel played a major role in locating potential interviewees. He would look out for or ask around about people who had moved to Pabo during the war (the one criterion a potential interviewee had to meet) and would subsequently visit them to see whether this was true and whether they were willing to participate in the research. As the research progressed, I directed Samuel in terms of gender, age, or LRA history in order to maintain a balanced mix, but the rest was up to him. Samuel's effect on the research will be discussed in further detail in the upcoming subsection 'The Encounter'.

Narratives and knowledge

The ethnographic methodology and the life history method are based on the assumption that interpersonal communication is a locus of knowledge (Corradi, 1991). This is to say, that narratives are important, but the life history method is not necessarily an easy way of extracting knowledge. Indeed, complications arise as 'a life history is not merely a collection of past memories, nor is it fiction' (ibid., p. 107); the inevitable connection between someone's past, present, and future, as well as a wide range of external factors influence what narrative is told at a given point in time. I will return to the external factors in the next section of this chapter, but would first like to make some more comments about the analytical levels of the method per se.

Eastmond (2007) makes a useful proposition, specifically related to the study of forced displacement, contending that '[p]laced in their wider socio-political and cultural contexts, stories can provide insights into how forced migrants seek to make sense of displacement and violence, re-establish identity in ruptured life courses and communities, or bear witness to violence and repression' (p. 248). Jackson (2002a) added that the act of storytelling can give a person a feeling of agency; even though we do not determine the exact course of our lives, at least we have some hand in defining their meaning.

40 See Map 2 on page 19 for more information on ethnic groups in Uganda.

The latter refers to another important realization in relation to using the life history method. It must be considered that the story someone tells is an ex-post rationalization of events that happened in his or her life. Claiming agency over these events and placing them in the context of one coherent story is a human way of making sense of our lives, albeit our lives are often messy and filled with random occurrences.

Considering all this, it is clear that narratives are not plain renditions of 'truth'. Eastmond (2007) usefully proposed four layers of analysis that can be used in the process of using narratives in research. The first level comes closest to the realist perspective: 'life as lived', which entails the flow of events that touch on a person's life. At the second level it gets more intricate, as 'life as experienced' involves the way a person perceives the events and ascribes meaning to what happens. In this process, someone draws on a range of 'tools' such as cultural repertoires and previous experiences. The third layer, then, is 'life as told'. Here, it is about how experience is framed and articulated. This is, again, dependent on a range of factors relating to context, temporality, and the particular audience one is facing; past experience is remembered and interpreted in light of one's past, present, and imagined future and is influenced by the (power) relationship between the narrator and the listener (ibid., 2007). The fourth and final level is 'life as text'. This book, and in particular the two empirical chapters (Chapter 5 and 6), are exactly that: it is the researcher's interpretation and representation of the story. In this interpretation, the researcher uses his or her own tools. Adding to Eastmond's ideas, I would also hold that, for each person who reads the eventual representation, the connotations are different; another layer of perception is added.

Overall, it can be seen that there is no direct representation of lived experience and that transformation takes place at many levels. Culture is central to lived experience and to narrativity, both for the one telling the story and for those who understand and retell the story. Critical or reflexive ethnography allows a researcher to be aware of both the other and the self. In the following section, I will reflect on some of the issues that were at play in these encounters between the various people in Pabo and me.

Life as told: The Encounter

A very exciting aspect of this research was that every day and every encounter were different. Conversing without a pre-arranged set of questions meant that the conversation could go any multitude of ways. Yet, it also meant

that there were many factors that influenced the eventual narrative that was presented to me. One such factor was who I was, or rather how the interviewees perceived me.

At the most basic level, I was a white, young, unmarried woman. The first of these actually carried many connotations. Given that the people I spoke with had survived time in a camp, they were usually familiar with white people. Yet, white people had always come to them from a position of superiority; they came from NGOs or churches and always brought some benefits along with them. It became clear during my second interview in Pabo that some people still put all white people in this singular category – of which I was part. At this time, I spoke with David – a former camp leader – who kept saying 'you' when he was talking about white people who came to Pabo as part of their work for NGOs during the time of the camp.[41] The connotation with handouts and economic opportunity had not faded either. A number of the interviewees would ask me, at the end of the interview, whether I perhaps 'knew people' who would be able to support them, their family, or another cause. This always made me feel uncomfortable, not least because I could see how they were struggling, but I also knew that I could not support all of them nor did I want word to spread that there was something to gain from participating in my research.

Overall, it was a reality check for me: for the first time in my life, I was made harshly aware of my skin colour and the connotations as well as the privileges that come with this. Methodologically, I dealt with this by asking Samuel to tell potential participants beforehand that there would be no payment for the interviews and to emphasize that I was a university student doing research and that I was not attached to an NGO, government, or charitable organization. I did not pay my participants for their participation. At the end of my stay, however, I did give some small presents (sugar, soap, a hoe, or a personalized gift) to the people I had worked most closely with. I did this in collaboration with Samuel and tried to ensure that the gift was seen as a sign of gratitude, friendship, and respect. I specifically went to these people to say goodbye and this was often appreciated and in some cases I received a small gift as well or was invited to have a meal. It was a peculiar kind of relationship that developed between some of the interviewees and me, but I do believe there were aspects of true friendship in this.

41 An example of this is that David said the following (in English) about the time of the camp: 'You are the one our bosses. You are the one at that time. You are bringing item from outside, reaching Entebbe, so you send it to Pabo.' (sic.) (interview 2).

Photo 7
Author visit at home

Aside from skin colour, gender and age also played a role in my interactions with interviewees. Being a female researcher, I think, had both up- and downsides. On the one hand, some women might have found it easier to open up to a woman about trouble they were having with their husbands. Men, on the other hand, might have felt, in some cases, that I would not be able to understand 'male issues.' In terms of taking me seriously, I think my skin colour counterbalanced the fact that I was young and a woman to a large degree. That I was unmarried opened the door to many suggestions by both men and women for 'a nice Acholi man' that I could marry and own a piece of land with. This was something that could easily be laughed off, but it also led to one of the participants texting me inappropriately and coming up to me when I was without Samuel. This behaviour put me in a situation where I felt uncomfortable, and it made me decide to not interview him any further.[42]

The untold and the 'untrue'

As argued above, a person's past, current, and imagined future situation as well as the interaction between the interviewee and the researcher determine what story is told and how. In my case, because I was white, some people might have been more inclined to tell me stories of hardship and poverty than stories of happiness. Because I was a woman, people might want to portray themselves as someone who would never hurt a woman. Overall, I think that even if someone else did exactly the same research as I did, and

42 Even though I do not see these occurrences as a form of serious sexual intimidation by this particular participant, it did affect the research to a minor extent. The issue of sexual intimidation during fieldwork is not often addressed despite it being a fairly common issue (Sharp & Kremer, 2006), and I believe this is a taboo that should be broken.

asked exactly the same questions, the results would be different. People would tell someone else (a man, an older or younger person, someone from Uganda, etc.) a different story.

Yet, it is also important to reflect on what remains untold and what might have been false information. Both are incredibly hard to determine. As stated in the previous section, this research is based on the epistemological assumption that 'one single truth' cannot be found. As such, it becomes incredibly hard to discern what parts of stories might really be too far removed from 'life as lived' or 'life as experienced' at that time. In the culmination of the untold and the untrue, one can wonder whether, when crucial parts of a story are left out, someone is lying by omission.

It became especially clear how blurry 'truth' is as my research started to involve listening to the life stories of multiple members of the same family. Different members of the same family would sometimes tell me conflicting stories in terms of temporality or occurrence of events. This was very difficult to deal with, and I did so on a case-by-case basis, as will be highlighted in the empirical chapters of this book. Overall, however, I would like to emphasize that the untold and the untrue also reveal things about a person or about societal norms. Saying that someone is 'lying' has very negative connotations and implies malicious intent. Yet, how someone tells their story and thus also what one might leave out, provides the researcher with information. The current method of interviewing multiple members of a household in an initially unstructured manner allows for the construction of multiple stories and the possibility to compare stories in order to find out what issues might be deliberately left out for cultural or personal reasons.

In terms of what remains untold, I would also like to highlight the issue of cultural and linguistic differences and potential misunderstanding. As a non-Acholi, I was unable to fully comprehend the cultural connotations of behaviours, both in the past and the present, as well as that of specific words. I acknowledge that this might mean that I missed out on information that was not explicitly told.

Samuel

The latter also brings me to the issue of translation. The encounters I had were never just me and the interviewee. Samuel was also always present. As said before, Samuel pre-arranged the interviews and also translated on the spot. He was, moreover, like a cultural guide, as I would ask him all sorts of

questions during our walks on the way to the interviewees and during our shared lunches.

How I got to know Samuel is a perfect example of serendipity, and, for that matter, one that I am very grateful for. After I arrived in Gulu, I saw a post on Facebook by a Korean man in a Facebook group called 'Expats in Gulu'. When I looked at his profile, I could see that his place of residence was Pabo, and I decided to send him a personal message, asking him what he was doing in Pabo and what life was like there. At this point, I had very little idea about what to expect. In return, this man kindly offered to put me in contact with a local from Pabo who was willing to show me around. This was Samuel. We met, he showed me around, we talked, and he expressed his willingness to be part of the research. I decided to hire him, and we would work together for the next months. I paid Samuel for his translations every day we worked together, and it was beautiful to see that he used the money he earned to pay his graduation fee for university, to invest in his brother's tailoring business, and to support his mother.

The reason why I discuss Samuel and his role in this research is that a translator has a huge impact on the information that is conveyed as well as on the flow of the interview. As also argued by Temple and Young (2004), there is no neutral position from which to translate. Power relationships are involved and Samuel's personality as well as position in Pabo had an important influence. His effect on the information gathered and my interpretation of it is something that can only be speculated about, as a counterfactual is impossible. As such, the point is to be reflective about it – something that will return throughout the empirical chapters. Below, I aim to give an idea of who Samuel was, so the reader can also be critical of the information that follows in the empirical chapters. What I will describe here is based on personal observations, casual conversations, and an 'official' interview we had at the end of the fieldwork.

To people asking about my translator, I would affectionately describe Samuel as a 'weird cookie'. I think the most accurate characterisation of him was to say that he was almost always playing. He would be singing when we were walking, sometimes dancing, and sometimes picking flowers, leaves, or anything green. He would giggle a lot and often make

Photo 8
Samuel on anthill[44]

fun of my whiteness or of how *mzungu*[43] women were more like men. His playfulness made him very good at breaking the ice when we were visiting someone for the first time. But Samuel also had a serious side. This came to the fore when we were talking about his family or when we were doing interviews that touched on more grave topics. His ability to be both light and serious wasan enormous advantage.

Samuel and his family moved to Pabo in 1996, during the time of the camp. Given that they had lived there ever since (with some short interruptions), Samuel had the same experience of protracted displacement as the other people we spoke to for the research. The fact that Samuel experienced life in the displacement camp as well probably allowed him to empathize with the interviewees who had similar experiences and to put their experiences into words. Yet, his own experience might also colour how he interpreted the words of the interviewees.

When Samuel was 22 years old, he experienced a significant transformation. He was put into contact with South Korean missionaries who were part of the Born-Again Church. They hired Samuel first as a gardener and later as a translator. As he was working for them, they realized that he was a smart kid, and, through a church program, the Koreans paid for his education. He was sent to Kampala to study theology. Samuel's affiliation with the Born-

43 'Mzungu' is a word used in many different Bantu languages to refer to white people. Even though the Acholi have their own word for white people ('munu'/'muno', depending on your spelling), the word mzungu was used frequently as well.

44 Samual's face has been slightly blurred to decrease recognisability.

Again Church is very significant because it influenced how people saw him. In Samuel's own words, he was kind of a 'celebrity' in Pabo, as he had done a lot of preaching throughout the neighborhood and was part of the Born-Again Church's effort to convert people in Pabo. Additionally, he 'enjoyed singing' and even recorded a few (religious) songs, which also meant that many people knew who he was.

Samuel's active involvement in the community in Pabo and the fact that he had lived in Pabo almost his entire life meant that he knew many people. He was able to identify people who also moved to Pabo during the time of the camp fairly easily and approach them for the research. He told me that he would go to the Local Council leaders to ask them for the records of people who were formally abducted and to the former leaders to see if they remembered which people were there during the time of the camp as well. This meant that he knew some of the participants beforehand. When I asked him how he thought the community in Pabo saw him, he answered that most would know him as a singer/musician, then as a pastor, and finally as a nursery and primary school teacher.

The fact that Samuel was part of the Born-Again Church may well have affected what people told us. It is possible that the interviewees – and especially those who had converted to Christianity (which was the majority) – would frame their stories in such a way that they would conform to the standards and morality that is propagated by the Born-Again Church. From a more positive perspective, it might also have meant that people shared more, as confessions within the religious context are generally treated as confidential.

Overall, however, I think the stories that will be presented in the empirical chapters show that Samuel and I were able to gain people's trust and make them feel comfortable enough to tell their stories. I was worried that having a male translator might make women less willing to share stories of abuse or problems in their marriage. This might have been true (and yet again it is impossible to know what could have been), but there were women who did open up about this.

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that I worked with two other translators as well. The first was Violet, a young woman from Pabo. I had told Samuel that I wanted to work with a female translator and that I wanted to interview his mother, but not with him present. Consequently, he proposed her. She translated my first interview with Samuel's mother, but it quickly became apparent that it was not going to work. I discovered that she was married to Samuel's younger brother and was thus also a family

member – something I was aiming to avoid in the first place. Then, Odongo Christopher, a friend from Gulu, translated a few interviews with Samuel's mother and stepfather. This worked very well, and the fact that Samuel was not there might have helped them to talk more freely about the family situation.

Overall, it must be acknowledged that having a translator has a major effect on the research process. In this case, gender, religion, and familial or friendship ties influenced the information I ended up with. Additionally, Samuel's choice of words and translations of expressions affected my interpretation. Language is a complicated and layered instrument that is interwoven with culture and power. Overcoming all intricacies is an impossibility, yet it is important to reflect on them.

Life as text

What can be read in the following chapters is my final interpretation. As reconstructed in these pages, many factors have already had an impact on the conveyed information: people's own filters, power relations, and translation were the main influencing factors. In addition, I have, of course, made a selection of what to tell and what not to tell; not everything can be captured within this book. Yet, I have aimed to create a balanced narrative in which different voices can be heard and which, hopefully, does justice to people's stories. The latter inspired the choice for longer stories of individuals or families at the beginning of each of the empirical chapters. I firmly believe these people and their stories (and those of many others) deserve to be heard and give the topic a human face.

As I started the writing process, I realized that this meant that I had to let go of much of what I learned during my training as a political scientist. As Cunliffe (2010) argued, ethnography is as much a literary as an academic pursuit. Instead of focusing on 'data', 'facts', and numbers, I increasingly started to realize that these did not exist in this context. Additionally, I had to move away from the 'cold' writing style that comes with political science and, in places, write prose. As such, this final writing also represented a process of growth for me. In this final result, I believe the fact that I was still learning is palpable; there is a mix between a description of the broad political situation and analysis of individual experiences as well as a tension between wanting to be structured and organized and the inevitable messiness of life that comes to the fore in life histories.

In the process of coming to the eventual text, I re-listened to the recorded interviews, took notes, sometimes transcribed, and listened again. I grouped people together over and over as common threads supported by individual stories emerged. Along the way, I learned to look beyond the categorizations and to let the blurriness in.

Importantly, I had to make some amendments to the original stories. Firstly, I use pseudonyms throughout the text. As this is the only personal detail that was changed, people who know the people that I have written about well will still recognize them in the stories. Additionally, some of the participants allowed me to take their photograph and gave their consent for the image to be used in my academic work. This was a beautiful addition, but also brought out a dilemma I struggled with for a while in the process of publishing this book: I wanted to protect these people's identities, but also give a human face to the topic of displacement. In the end, I consulted with Samuel and I opted to use drawn portraits of the participants in this book rather than their pictures. These portraits were produced by Stefan van der Heijden, a very creative friend of mine. The portraits capture some of the essence of the participants yet also maintain some anonymity. Again, people who know the people who were interviewed well will still recognize them. Even though not using some personal pictures from the field – e.g. more pictures of Samuel or of me and the interviewees – was sometimes a painful sacrifice that did not seem to do justice to how closely I worked with these people, I hope I still made the right decision by being cautious and anonymising the participants.

I also opted to change everybody's name, firstly because I made this promise before the commencement of the interviews and secondly because it makes it less easy to find someone online. It is also important to mention that I asked everybody for verbal consent to use the (anonymized) information they gave me during the interviews for academic purposes. A list of interviews (using the interviewees' pseudonyms) and the dates they took place can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition to the changed names and use of portraits, I also made certain amendments to the quotes that are presented in this book. None of these amendments have, to the best of my knowledge, changed the content of what people said, as the changes were grammatical in nature. I aimed to stick as closely as possible to what the interviewee meant to say (also considering the context in which they said it). Yet, in order to make them intelligible, I sometimes had to change the tense or leave certain words out or add words in. These changes are indicated with square brackets. Finally, in some cases I

changed the subject pronoun from the third person to the first person. This was necessary because Samuel would, in his translations, switch between the third and the first person. As the original Acholi was in the first person and because the first-person narrative is more powerful, I decided to stick with the first person in the direct quotes.

Conclusion

With all these ifs, ands, and buts in mind, I would like to close this chapter by underlining my belief in the value of life histories and narratives. In the study of humans, and, more importantly, in the effort to understand one another, we cannot let technical concerns override the need to listen to each other. Yet, we cannot deflect all these issues and still claim academic value. There is a balance between methodological rigidity and practical flexibility that must be searched for but that is hard to find. This study is not perfect; yet, through reflection and reflexivity, I have aimed to acknowledge some of its weaknesses and particularities. So, now it is time to move on to the empirical part of this book. To listen to and engage with some of the stories that once started as someone's life as lived.

Photo 9
Entering Pabo

5 Why not leave Pabo?: *First empirical chapter*

'Trust me,
this will take time but there is order here,
very faint, very human. […]
Meander if you want to get to town.'
(Ondaatje, 1987)

Samuel and I walked over the sizzling tarmac, back towards Gulu. We were on our way to meet Samuel's mother, Aber Lucy. Cars and trucks were passing by closely, jolting over the speed bumps. On both sides were houses spread out across the vast lands, punctuated by small, sandy tracks and dry, yellow tufts of long grass. Looking over the houses and further into the distance, we saw some green trees scattered in a largely brown landscape, surrounded by the outlines of South Sudanese mountains on the far horizon. All of this was topped by a sky that was, in that moment, of the clearest blue and a sun that burned mercilessly.

Children wearing school uniforms passed us by, holding hands, talking, and laughing – especially when they saw this *mzungu* walking and sweating in the unbearable sun. Women passed us by as well, with bags or baskets on top of their head and a baby wrapped in a blanket tied to their back. All the while, people greeted us, all shaking hands and the women slightly bending their knees when greeting. Even though we were running late for our meeting, Samuel was obliged to stop and make conversation; they asked each other how they were doing ('*itye maber*? or: '*mzungu how are you?!*'), how their families were, and how 'home' was ('*gangtye maber?*'). Usually little information was exchanged, but if there was news it could be easily passed on.

After we followed the road exiting the center of Pabo town, we turned right onto one of the sandy tracks. This led us over several compounds. The first had a large mango tree in the middle and was surrounded by light brown sand, swept into a circular pattern. Another consisted of several brick houses with iron sheets for roofs and a large chicken-run. As we continued our walk, we reached Samuel's family's compound. On the compound there were five grass-thatched round houses, one rectangular house with an iron sheet roof, and a large cote where the family kept pigeons. Samuel lived by himself in

the house with the iron-sheet roof. Having experienced many fires during the time of the camp, he feared grass-thatched houses. His brothers also had their own houses, which they shared with their respective families. Laundry was softly waving in the wind, children were playing outside, and women had started food preparations.

On this compound we found Lucy sitting outside on a mat, pouring her self-made *simsim* paste[45] into small plastic bags. Her hair was usually braided or otherwise covered in a colourful fabric. A cloth reaching almost until the ground was tied around her waist. I met Lucy as a quiet and obliging woman, who did not want to disclose too much. Yet, as I continued to visit and we continued to talk, she opened up and I got to learn what life had thrown at her and how she dealt with it. As we progressed, Lucy described it as follows:

> You know, for us, people who are growing old, as time goes by, you forget some of these things that happened. But it doesn't mean you don't remember. You remember, but when you are asked abruptly, it's hard to put them back together. But I can tell you. Because this is the third time that we are doing this interview, at least I [have] also ha[d] time to reflect on things that happened in the past, even when we are not doing interviews. So, I have remembered some things, but, of course, those are the things that I have remembered from the time when I know what is happening around me.

As we get to know more about Lucy, parts of Samuel's story will also be introduced, as well as that of her current husband. The different stories from this family form a whole, but, at times, also conflict – evidencing the subjectivity of storytelling. I suggest that the following stories are read with an open heart and an open mind; the research questions posed in the introduction will form the lens through which the stories will be analysed, but, inevitably, there is more to them than can be captured in the subsequent analysis.

45 Simsim is the colloquial term for sesame seeds. Simsim is often grounded into a paste, and this paste constitutes an important ingredient in the Acholi kitchen. It is used to prepare various kinds of green vegetables (most prominently boo or malakwang, both similar to spinach) as well as pasted fish or beef.

Portrait 10
Lucy

Lucy, Samuel, and James

When we met, Aber[46] Lucy was 53 years old and lived in Pabo on a small compound with six of her children, her husband, two daughters-in-law, and an untraceable number of children who were either her grandchildren, taken in, or just visiting. She was a beautiful lady with fine features, who spoke softly and serenely – despite the things she had gone through. She may not look the part, but her story shows that she is fierce and full of perseverance. She was one of the people who was hit by the war, who spent over a decade living in the IDP camp (even raising her children there), and who has not left Pabo since the war ended.

Lucy was, in her own words, 'confused' since the end of the war. What seemed to be most vividly on her mind was the moment her first husband was killed by the LRA. This moment changed her life in many ways, and set in motion a series of significant events and decisions. She and her husband used to live in Cet Kana, her husband's village. This followed the Acholi custom of virilocal residence, meaning that the woman is expected to move in with her husband after marriage.[47] Life in the village before the war was described by Lucy mostly in romantic terms, as she recalled cooperation and people providing for each other: '[…] there was great cooperation in the village. Great cooperation compared to nowadays […] and people could provide for each other. And when the visitors come, everyone would be happy. They kill goats, cows… People eat. So they just feel happy. That is the life in the village […]'.

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46 In the Acholi context, people are given two names: one Acholi name and an English name. Most Acholi names say something about the circumstances under which a baby was born. 'Aber' means 'beautiful' or 'good'. Yet, there can also be names with less positive connotations, for example Ocan/Acan (Ocan for boys, Acan for girls) meaning 'born in poverty' or Ojok/Ajok meaning something along the lines of 'the spiritual one'. The latter is a rather common name and is often given to children who are born with some sort of physical deformity (e.g. an extra toe or finger). Despite its negative connotations, the name Ojok/Ajok is given 1) to appease the spirits and 2) out of tradition (Ondongo Christopher, personal communication, 2018).

47 'After' marriage sounds less complicated than it is in this case. The Acholi observe various stages of marriage, and a couple can be 'somewhat married' in case (a part of) the dowry is still outstanding. Often, however, couples will move in together anyway. Also note that people will refer to their partner as their 'husband' or 'wife' even when they are not officially married; there is indeed no Acholi word that has the same meaning as 'boyfriend', 'girlfriend', or 'partner' does in the English language. The Acholi rules regarding marriage and the option of polygamy will return in the subsection 'Land tenure and rights of access and use'.
In this case, Lucy was proud to be fully married to her first husband; he had paid the dowry in full and she had 'produced' male children.

More happiness came to Lucy in Cet Kana as she had her four eldest sons there: Philip, Ivan, Samuel, and Peter. Having male children was very important to Lucy – as it is more broadly in the Acholi context – and also fortified her marriage.[48] Consequently, the death of her husband at the hands of the LRA was a majorly disruptive event. The time that followed was a difficult and stressful period, and one during which she developed stomach ulcers (open sores on the inside lining of the stomach and the upper portion of the small intestine). She described the situation during our third interview:

> And so that's the life I lived. It was difficult […] they came and killed my husband so still life was very difficult. The husband who had tried to at least make me have a better life than the life I had had before… And then I thought: 'Oh, this is the end', but life became even more difficult when now I had to take care of these children and medication and give them food, try and give them a life. It became very, very, very hard.

Feeling the increasing threat of violence as well as a huge burden without apparent support from the late husband's family,[49] she decided to leave the village in search of security. This, as it turned out, was easier said than done. Over the course of the next five years, she would move around before settling down for a longer period in Pabo. At first, she moved to Laliya, on the northern outskirts of Gulu town. When Laliya was also no longer safe, she took her kids closer to town, to Kaunda Grounds. Kaunda Grounds is a large field, bordering the center of Gulu town, and currently in use as an outdoor basketball court, even featuring as the location for the prestigious 2017 East African Games. During the war, however, Kaunda Grounds was a place where people would camp or would spend the night. The latter meant that mostly children would arrive there in the evening from other parts of town and from surrounding villages, seeking to avoid abduction by the rebels. Yet, since Kaunda Grounds was not an acknowledged IDP camp, there was also no provision of food or other aid. And since it was in the middle of town, there was also no way of growing your own crops. For this reason, Lucy again gathered her children and the few belongings they had to move to Coope, which would later become the site of one of the many IDP camps.

48 According to some, a couple is only fully married after dowry has been paid and the woman has given birth to at least one son.

49 According to Acholi custom, widows can be inherited by the husband's brother or, in a milder form, a brother can become the 'protector' of the widow. Even if there is no inheritance, widows are still supposed to be taken care of by the clan they married into. See more in the section 'The issue of land'.

After a short while, however, an increasing number of rebel attacks that left many dead made the situation there untenable as well. Lucy decided to move back to the village where she was born to live with her brother. Lucy lived here until 1996, when, she recalled, 'the government started chasing people from the villages' and into the camps.

Sometime either before moving to the camp or during the time of the camp,[50] Lucy gave birth to a fifth son: David. The father was a man she had met during the time she moved around. She said she deliberately set out to meet a man because she was having trouble caring for her four sons, and having the support of a husband would help her. After they had a baby, however, it came to light that she and the man were related on her father's side. The Acholi have always been exogamous, meaning that marriage within the clan is forbidden (Butt, 1952; Crazzolara, 1938). As such, the issue was very contentious, and Lucy only talked about this man after we had had several conversations. The issue was resolved by the clan deciding that the couple should separate forever and that the man was not allowed to visit the child.

And so Lucy stayed in Pabo as a single mom. The time in the IDP camp is not one she liked to talk about. It was filled with hardship in the form of poverty and fear of abuse at the hands of the LRA or the army:

> In the beginning it was difficult because you had to go fend for firewood, fetch for food from maybe your former gardens because there wasn't... the government wasn't providing food in the camps and when you left the camps to go find food, if you're unlucky, it was a chance you would either get caught and killed by the rebels or you would get in trouble with the army, government, for leaving the camps. So, that was very difficult for me and for other people too.

Moreover, there was a 'big problem of water[…] [which] was almost another war on peoples' lives,' as thousands of people had to fetch water from only a few boreholes. As she recalled, people would drink water from trenches, get sick, and eventually die.

50 Lucy told me that David was born in 2003, but Samuel (who admittedly seemed to have a better memory for dates and chronology) said he was born in 1993. I met David as well and would estimate him to be older than 14 at that time, but there is no way of knowing the exact date.

Portrait 11
Samuel

Owot Samuel, who was a child at that time, also remembered some good things about life in the camp. Samuel moved to Pabo with his mother and brothers when he was seven years old, and as he talked about the time of the camp, it became clear that, as he aged, his perception changed. Before getting to the negative sides of life in the camp, Samuel reflected on his more carefree times in Pabo, for example how he used to make a little extra money by collecting food that was left behind after the World Food Program had finished its food donations:

> I used to sell maize during the [time of the] camp. […] I begin collecting them one by one, one by one, in the bucket. Sometimes I end up having like four cups of maize, two cups of beans… Come back home. And then mommy always t[old] me: 'That is your money.' I go and sell. One cup of maize: 100. So I have 400. Plus two cups of 200 each is 400, I have 800 in my pocket. Tomorrow I am a rich man! So, I go with 800. Ah! All children will come to me. […] So, I have to buy balloons and when I buy a balloon, then I get the old clothes or the polyethene bags and I make the ball. […] So, inside is balloon and outside is the clothes. Then I tie them very well. That would be the ball. Real ball, soccer ball! It just bounces so much and I enjoy. […] Then with some money I will buy the tin. Tin was 50 shillings. […] I came back home, made my own car with that tin. […] Then when I make that one I sell to other people: 500 or 1,000 – they buy.

> Actually in camps, as a young child, you don't see bad things. You just enjoy. Things are okay when you are young. You don't think… Only the mom, just there: 'What will we eat today?' For you, a child, you just sit and see. Food is there? Oh, food is there! After getting satisfied: 'Let me go and play.' Yes. With your friends. So right in the beginning of the camp there we were just enjoying camps.

As Samuel acknowledges, his mom did indeed have much more to worry about. One of the most disastrous things Lucy remembered that happened was that the house she rented in Pabo burned down. One of Lucy's boys had been playing with fire inside the house and accidentally set it on fire. All her belongings were lost. Lucy had been a witchdoctor for a long time already at this point, curing people from all sorts of illnesses, afflictions, or disputes with spirits in exchange for money or livestock. But now, in this fire, all her attributes for performing her witchcraft were lost. This was a huge blow to her business, as many of these attributes had great spiritual as well as monetary value and would be hard to replace, especially during the time of war. Moreover, it meant that Lucy and her children had become homeless. As

she described: '[I] could sleep under the veranda with the children, without any bedsheet, without any mat, sleep outside with the children. Without anything to be eaten. [We] could just go and pick the leftover that got burned in the house, wash them, then eat. Just like that.'

Fires were not uncommon during the time of the camp and would rapidly spread because the houses had grass-thatched roofs and were so close together. As Lucy remembered:

> […] there was a certain fire that would start, it almost burned down all camps, all houses in the camps. It wasn't only Pabo camp, it was so many camps, where you would just be in the house and you would hear people yelling: 'Fire!' It's on your roof, burning. And that swept out the camps.

Samuel also had vivid memories of the fires in the camp, which were like magic to him:

> […] the camp became so dangerous and it was not comfortable when the houses started burning. That was a time we did not like camps at all. 2007, 2008 camp was burning. There was fire which comes and you don't know where it comes from. Ugh. Like a magic. Like a magic like that. So it was burning the houses like nothing… So, that year we do not enjoy camps at all because you sit when your heart is not settled. You are upset at all. Any time your house is burning. Remember the elders, moms might have gone to the garden. So, you are at home alone. What if it starts burning? So, what the parents were doing: just bring everything from inside outside. They bring everything: clothes, bed, they pack here, under the tree. And they go to the garden. Because anytime you may come and find the roof is whoosh burned. At least you have your things outside. So, those are the kind of thing I could remember happening in the camps. So well.

The fire that destroyed their house was a major setback for Lucy and once again made her feel like she could not carry the load by herself, and so she decided to get another man.[51] Lucy found a new husband and had two children with this man during the time of the camp, but it soon became clear

51 Both Lucy and Samuel mentioned difficult times in life as the reason for Lucy to get a new husband. This says a lot about the rationale for 'romantic' engagement in this particular context and suggests that there is a high dependency of a woman on a man for survival. Or, perhaps this is only a perceived need since many women (including Lucy, as will become clear later in this story) were actually the main providers for the family. This is a topic that will return in the next chapter.

that he was not good for her. Lucy remembered how he would eat all the food she and the children harvested but would not contribute; that he was lazy and would drink too much. She remembered how he used to come home drunk and abuse her. This man also made a huge impression on Samuel, and, speaking softly, he recalled this difficult period in his mother's life:

> […] he always [drank] too much alcohol. You know, when people are still in courtship, they don't show their real character. So, when they were already into marriage, he show[ed] what he was. And what he is. So, he was beating mom seriously, sometimes wounded, sometimes unconscious, half-dead, like that. […] But […] my stepdad continues, he increased the violence so much. […] And one day he beats my mom unconscious and the neighbors are the ones who rush with mommy to the hospital. When she reach[ed] there she was fully unconscious, but the doctors worked on her very hard and she came back to life. Then the LCs, local leaders, they decided to separate them because this man might kill my mom any time. So, they separated them officially in the sub-county. Then, they [evenly] divided the millet, the sorghum, the groundnuts, everything, the cassava which was there in the garden.. they divided everything equally with the man. So, he took his part and left. And mommy remained with the half with us.

Lucy was married to this man for a few years, and his behaviour affected the family in many ways. One particular aspect it affected was the family's mobility. As a security measure, Lucy had bought a piece of land in a different zone of the camp for her children to live on if something happened to her. Yet, when the husband's abuse increased, she decided to move to that plot of land herself. The husband, however, followed them and would come home drunk and pick fights not only with her but with the neighbors. The neighbors were not happy with this and decided to give Lucy back her money and to make her leave the land. They gave them six months to find a different place. This left the family feeling lost, as they had expected to stay on that land forever. Additionally, all the moving around was not good for Lucy's witchcraft business, as people no longer knew where to find her. After six months, however, the family found a new house in yet another zone and decided to stay there.

Around this time – 2005, as Samuel recalled – Samuel and his brother were supposed to start secondary school. Since his mother could not afford this, she decided to send them to her brother in Coope camp to attend school there. Samuel lived here for five years before returning to Pabo. In the year that followed, an important event occurred in Samuel's life: he was introduced to

South Korean missionaries living one village south of Pabo. They employed him as a gardener for one year, and put him in contact with someone who was willing to pay for his schooling. Yet, the benefactor would only pay for school and a Bachelor's degree at Makerere University in Kampala if Samuel agreed to study theology. Even though he had always wanted to become a mechanic or driver, he gladly accepted the offer. He left for Kampala in 2012, and in 2017 he received his diploma. According to Samuel, this has greatly influenced his life. He now has an education and has built a network across Uganda, creating many more opportunities. On the other hand, however, it turned out that the gift did not come without strings attached: they now demanded that Samuel work for the mission for a very low wage.

Lucy was proud of her children, but she also worried about their futures. She was especially worried about the effect that life in the camp has had on them. She saw a clear distinction between the four who were born first and the three who were very young when they came to camp or who were born in the camp. According to her, the first four had already 'had a test of what bitter life was' before being displaced and were therefore more accustomed to obeying her. Additionally, she thought that the older ones were less influenced by life in the camp.

It seemed hard for Lucy to put her finger on what exactly it was about camp life that might have had an influence on the younger generation. She seemed to think that the introduction of new leisure activities had a negative effect. As an example, she talked of her fifth born who 'claims to be pursuing music'. He was two years old when the family arrived in Pabo and thus spent his childhood and adolescent years living in the displacement camp. Talking about him, she said:

> Definitely the camp situation and life influenced him. […] During the camps, when these kids were growing up, people came up with different different different things. [...] things kids could get involved in during their spare time or teaching kids how to sing, teaching kids how to play karate, taekwondo, football [...] [My] son started to think he was going to be a singer, starting to dodge school to go for those singing practices... coming back and, you know, going to start learning how to drink because apparently when you are drunk you can sing louder or very well. So, he ended up dropping out of school in primary 7. Didn't even reach mid-way primary 7. So, [I] told him to just stay

> home because he became very lazy, doesn't want to work, just wants to do this music which he can't even do because he gets too drunk to make music.

Perhaps Lucy's problem was not necessarily with the leisure activity itself but rather with the fact that it was provided during school time and that alcohol started playing a role in it. Alcoholism and 'laziness' – which were perhaps both expressions of having nothing to do all day? – were problems Lucy experienced personally with her husband and some of her younger children and also saw a lot in her surroundings. In the end, she said, it pained her to think about what kind of future her son would have. He did make shoes out of old tires that he sold at the market, but, according to Lucy, this money would be drunk already that same evening. Especially now that he had a wife and a baby, she feared that, in the end, it would again become her responsibility to take care of all of them.

Yet, the issue she was most concerned about when it came to her children was the issue of land. According to Acholi custom, land is passed down following patrilinear inheritance rules. Women do not have rights to family land themselves, but can often make a claim via their husbands or their sons.[52] Lucy had four sons with her first husband and as such, she also argued, there should be a piece of land for these sons in her first husband's village to cultivate and to live on. When she tried to return to her first husband's land after the war ended, however, her brothers-in-law rejected her. They claimed that they now owned the land because her husband had died a long time ago. Her eldest son, however, was not willing to give up on his father's land and started living there. The uncles bothered him on a daily basis, and Lucy was just not willing to go through this as well.

Lucy did not see the land of her subsequent two husbands as an option. The last man she married was called James, whom I met, and the reasons why the family did not move to his plot of land were somewhat complicated. The first time I met James, he was wearing a sleeveless shirt and was covered in flour. Apparently, he had just come back from work at the grinding mill in town. After the usual introductions and opening prayer, he started narrating. Interestingly, his story was interwoven with a high political awareness. He began by mentioning that he grew up under Obote's regime, and then moved on to talk about rebel movements that, according to him, flowed from this regime and moved into northern Uganda.

52 A more detailed description of land inheritance and different rules and regulations will be provided in the subsection 'Land tenure and rights of access and use'.

Portrait 4
James

Quickly, however, we reached the more personal notes and he began to talk about his time with the LRA after he was abducted around 1986/1987. He was approximately twenty years old at that time. What is interesting about the stories James told is that they hold many contradictions. He spent most of his life first fighting for the LRA and then for the Home Guard – a branch of the Ugandan army – and it seems to have left him spiritually as well as politically conflicted. It started when, soon after he had been abducted, he was selected to be a 'controller'. A controller held an important place within the LRA and formed a kind of bridge to the spiritual world that was an important component of the movement.

Being a controller was a prestigious job and it seemed that it gave him a sense of purpose, but as we talked and he reflected on his time with the LRA, he said that his work with the spirits was 'satanical'.[53] Seriously, and with gestures to emphasize his words, he told of the importance of his job and how the LRA leader Joseph Kony had personally selected him:

> The controller is the one in charge of the holy water Joseph Kony uses. So, I was the one to sprinkle the water in the air and whenever I did that, someone in the group would get possessed by the Holy Spirit […]. And they would know something about where or if the army is going to attack.
>
> […] it manifests to him [Joseph Kony]. It's not like he just comes and chooses at random. He will come and choose a specific person who has been manifested to him to be the controller. Yeah, Joseph Kony. So, he will just come and pick that person. In one battalion there were not more than three controllers and probably not more than 20 in the whole army. […] I was abducted, but when I was there, I was there to kill. And if I escaped or didn't do it, they would kill me. So, it was definitely an important job.

As a controller, he was also the one who heard from the spirits on which roads there would be trouble, and so he would decide on which roads the LRA would travel. Additionally, he and one other controller would sprinkle holy water on those who were fighting in order to prevent them from getting injured. Until today, he is still impressed by Kony's capabilities. As he recalled, all of Kony's prophecies would come true immediately. What still baffled him was how Kony was able to use stones as bombs ('It's a stone, but it really

53 He converted to the Born-Again Church.

blasts'). These experiences conflicted with his current spiritual beliefs, and he put it, somewhat awkwardly, as follows:

> […] it works with the person who pours that water... the spirit, you even feel it inside, it speaks to you, you hear it.. But that's something I did a long time ago, back then, and it was really satanic. I am now Born Again, I am changed. And it's been long, so I don't remember most of it.

After having spent a little over two years with the LRA, James did not think that the LRA was making any headway; instead of progressing towards Kampala they were still in the north, killing innocent people. He decided to escape. Life was difficult for James when he returned to his village. The rebels looked for him constantly, and he was permanently on the run. Moreover, the government would come to the villages as well and, according to him, they behaved just as badly to civilians as the rebels did. He recalled the government army killing many people as well as soldiers burning down houses and killing animals. Reflecting on this period, he rhetorically asked: 'What kind of 'saving the land' is that?'

His thoughts on the government were thus not very positive, but still he joined the army after a few years. Whether or not this was a voluntary decision is hard to determine. On the one hand, James argued that Kony's movement murdered senselessly, and that he joined the army in order to protect his family and for the good of his country. On the other hand, he also knew that if the government knew you had returned from the LRA, they would either kill you or you would have to join the army. Perhaps he was protecting both himself and his family from the LRA as well as the government by joining the Home Guard. Or, perhaps, as might be deduced from his vivid descriptions of battles and his style of fighting, he enjoyed being a part of the fighting forces.

His conflicting political ideas also became apparent as he continued telling about his life. From earlier statements it already appeared that he had a certain admiration for Kony and that he sympathized with the broader goal of overthrowing the government. At some point, he even wanted Kony to be president and was convinced that joining a rebel movement was for the good of the Acholi people. Moreover, James was critical of the Ugandan Army's behaviour during the war, stating that 'President Yoweri [Museveni] had come to finish the people here, to finish the Acholi people. He came here very hostile.' Until we met, James continued to hold the belief that the government does not care about the Acholi people, and that the good things

the government brings are kept in the south of the country. At the same time, however, he also did not support the way in which the LRA was fighting the war. Overall, neither side seemed to fully correspond with James's beliefs.

In 2002, having fought for the Home Guard for twelve years, James decided to quit. This was during the war and the period of the camps, and so he moved to Pabo. During this time in the camp, he met Lucy and they moved in together. James never went back to his home village, as he believed that it was likely that they would kill him because he used to be a rebel. Moreover, he had spent so much time working for the army and being away from home that his brothers had divided the family land amongst themselves. James did not want to return to claim this because it would only cause conflict. As he reflected on the development of land value, he said:

> Those days land wasn't even for sale. […] Land was communal: it was for the good of the community. It wasn't for personal wealth and it wasn't for accumulation of wealth […] But that's what it is now. And even your own brother will kill you or chase you away […]. It is no longer what it used to be. Even someone you shared breastmilk [with] will hate you for it.

Lucy agreed with her husband that they should not try to live in his natal village. According to her, James did not really get along with his brothers, not least because he had not lived at home for so long. Lucy also thought that if she went there with all of her children – and remember, she had many sons, most still unmarried – people would think that they had only come to steal the land. Yet, this did not mean that James and Lucy were satisfied with this situation. In terms of the future, the most important thing they both wanted was for the children to have a place to stay, but their current land was simply too small. That was why Lucy always told her children to work hard so they could buy their own land to live on with their wives and children.

James and Lucy did not seem to have a concrete idea of what their own, personal future should look like. Both were farmers before the war, but ever since they had lost access to land, they appreciated their ability to work in the trading center, at the grinding mill or in the market selling produce and *simsim* paste. Lucy's wish for the future was ostensibly simple: she wanted to 'be somewhere where she could be without thinking.'

Portrait 5
Jane

Jane

Another strong person I met during my time in Pabo was Jane. Jane was an old lady who lived on the far northwestern outskirts of Pabo. It always took Samuel and I more than half an hour to walk there, but as we did, we could pick some mangos to eat along the way or marvel at the weird 'sausage trees' (officially named Kigelia trees) with their oblong, brown fruits dangling down. If it was raining, however, we would take a *boda boda* in order to get there as fast as possible. This often resulted in us sliding through the mud and me fearing for my life. But once we reached the compound where Jane lived, it would all be worth it. It was enchanting to listen to her rhythmic storytelling (even though I could only pick up a few words) and incredibly interesting to hear from someone who was like a living history book and who had given the effects of camp life abundant thought.

I say that Jane was like a living history book not only because she was 76 years old, but also because she had a unique vantage point: she had been raised by the chief of the Lamogi clan. The Lamogi are famed among the Acholi as one of the fiercest clans and one that had played a crucial role in resisting the British colonizers.[54] Her grandfather was the chief of this clan and, because Jane's father was hardly ever at home, he was the one who took care of her. According to Jane, being raised in the house of the chief meant that she was made aware of proper behaviour and of Acholi tradition. She was taught to have respect for others, especially the elders, and for Acholi traditions. Overall, she remembered being happy and healthy in the village. At a young age, she was already expected to work in the garden, but in her free time she loved to dance.

While Jane remembered her grandfather with much fondness, the same was certainly not true of her stepmother. Her father was not happy with his first wife, Jane's mother, because she only gave birth to girls. For this reason, he decided to get a second wife and to chase his first wife off the property.

54 There is an annual celebration in Lamogi sub-county to commemorate the 1911 Lamogi Clan Rebellion, during which three British soldiers were killed and many Lamogi fighters died. In general, it seemed that the Lamogi had become a symbol of resistance against colonialism. President Museveni spoke about it at the annual celebration in 2015 (see: The State House of Uganda (2015) http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/news/2015/03/22/%E2%80%9Clamogi-rebellion-against-british-rule-was-justified%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-president-museveni).

According to Jane, the second wife, Jane's stepmother, did not treat her very well. She would physically abuse her and also scold her:

> I actually experienced a lot of abuse. Especially physical abuse and sometimes psychological… Because the words my stepmom was speaking were not good. She sometimes said [that I] have to go and move with my mom. Because my mom is a restless woman, she is up and down, running after men, wanting to get many men. [She said that even] I am going to be like that. [She said that I] will be just a useless woman. So many things, bad things, she spoke to me.

To escape her stepmother, Jane decided to get married early so she could leave the house. To the dismay of the chief, she married at the age of 14 and moved in with her husband.

A few years after she got married, Uganda gained independence. Jane vividly remembered the transfer of power, which took place at the Kaunda Grounds in Gulu.[55] Together with her all-women's dancing group, she traveled to Gulu to join the celebrations. She recalled how Milton Obote – who himself was from northern Uganda – arrived at Kaunda Grounds to meet the British. According to Jane, the British then handed Obote a Bible to swear him in as a prime minister. What followed was the retreat of the British ('they said: 'For us, we are going") and a big celebration in Gulu.

Jane also remembered the leaders that followed Obote as well as the rise of first Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement and, subsequently, the LRA. Initially, she said, the LRA was good, because they only focused on praying. Later, however, they became too violent. On the other side of the conflict, the government was also treating civilians poorly, and 'the soldiers of Museveni were killing people so much.' Speaking in a low voice, Jane told me how one of her sons was also killed by the NRA. She blamed the government for not protecting the Acholi in general and her family in particular.

Jane argued that even though it was a bad idea to put people in the camps, in the end it was better than staying in the village, where death by the LRA was certain. Yet, it could not be denied that the war and subsequent displacement

55 I do not know how historically accurate this is. Pictures can be found on the internet of Obote holding a black book and a British officer standing next to him, but the location is unclear. Some sources say Kampala, others say Entebbe, and Jane seemed to remember some sort of ceremony taking place in Gulu. The celebration in Gulu might also have been an additional ceremony and not the official swearing-in ceremony.

robbed her of many things. First, there were the Karamojong — another ethnic group from the north — who raided all the family's livestock: they lost over 100 cows, goats, and chickens. Then, from Pabo camp – where they were supposed to be protected by the government – she lost seven of her nine children. One was killed by the NRA, one was poisoned, and two died of illness. Additionally, three of her children were abducted from the camp. One of them was murdered instantly, and two never returned. She assumed that these two were dead, too.

According to Jane, her marriage also broke down because of the time in the camp. Jane explained that after their arrival in Pabo, her husband increasingly started to drink heavily and behave violently. In fact, he had already been violent since their third year of marriage, but when the situation escalated during the time of the camp, she did not receive any support from the elders. This greatly disappointed Jane and, she said, symbolized the decay of traditional authority.[56]

Another point of friction between Jane and her husband was their polygamous marriage. When they lived in the village, her husband had a total of seven wives. Three of them moved with him to Pabo (the others left because he beat them), but Jane never had a very good relationship with her two co-wives. On arrival at Pabo camp, Jane experienced something of a culture shock, and her perception of social relations changed on a fundamental level. As she began to look around, she saw how other people were behaving and what life could also be like for her. As she described:

> Then, when we came to camps, we experienced another lifestyle. I could see how other people behaved in marriage. Some other people don't fight, they are peaceful, they are happy in their marriage. Sometimes I sat and thought: 'Why me? Why then me?' So, that's why sometimes I could advise my husband to behave well, like other people are also behaving in their marriage. But from there he continued, and added more fire to beating me: 'How can you teach me? Am I your child?' Like that. So, the way I was looking at the people who were living in the camp actually gave me a lesson that marriage can be peaceful. Because in the village I grew [up] only with that man, with other wives. Only within that community. But in camps, things were exposed. Different lifestyles. And that's why I said: 'Let me also have a

56 Aside from this one, Jane had many more opinions on the effect that camp life has had on the Acholi culture, moral world, and the behaviour of younger generations. These issues will return in Chapter 6.

> peaceful mind. For you, you continue with the other two wives.' So, I decided to stay here [in this compound].

So, Jane left her husband and decided to live elsewhere in Pabo. Her husband remained in the camp with his two other wives. Eventually, however, all the women left him.

Up until the day I met Jane, she had been living by herself on this other compound in Pabo. She had a good relationship with her two sons who were still alive. They would send her money because she was struggling with illness. Additionally, she took care of some of their children, who went to school in Pabo. If she had a choice, however, she would have preferred to live with one of her two sons, one of whom lived in Gulu and the other one in Apaa, to the north of Pabo. For the time being, though, she was tied to Pabo through her grandchildren.

Introduction

The life histories presented in the previous pages, represent a small selection of the stories collected for the purpose of this research. In the remainder of this chapter, I will gradually introduce more people and look for commonalities in experiences to give some answers to one of the main research questions of this book: Why did some people who moved to Pabo camp during the war never leave?

In order to provide some structure to the answering of this question, the chapter is divided into several sections. Within each section, a different dimension of the considerations for remaining in Pabo is discussed. The dimensions allow for an aggregation of experiences along similar lines, but should not be taken as discretely separate categories. Rather, I will explore how these dimensions overlap and interrelate when it comes to the actual life experiences of people. The life histories presented in the previous sections of this chapter constitute an illustration of the dimensions, yet simultaneously lay bare the idiosyncrasies of people's experiences.

In this chapter, practical concerns for remaining in Pabo will be considered, but I will also examine in-depth more abstract considerations such as social relations, cosmology, and what it means to 'be home' in the current context. One of the main points I will explore is the importance of land in the Acholi context. This discussion will show, in particular, how all dimensions come together and form an intricate web. I will also consider in this section, the relationship between geographical place, social space, identity, and belonging. Overall, this exploration of the reasons why people have remained in Pabo will show how complicated the issue of displacement is; it will show that devising a policy response is not an easy matter and that it will remain extremely difficult to determine when displacement ends.

Economic considerations and the presence of facilities

Livelihoods

Let us start with the basics: survival. One of the main concerns that was voiced by people throughout the interviews was that they were struggling to make ends meet and were worried about their ability to come up with enough money to fulfil their families' basic needs. An evaluation of where to reside was thus largely influenced by whether or not they would be able to carry out income-generating activities there. Such economic considerations might, at

first sight, seem to be straightforward monetary cost-benefit analyses, but it soon became clear that there was more to it.

Traditionally, most of the Acholi population in northern Uganda was engaged in subsistence agriculture. Those who were successful in this context would be able to expand and sell their surplus at a marketplace, which would allow them to make some additional money and buy 'luxury' goods (e.g. a bicycle or iron roofing sheets). Yet, as the villages were very far apart, most necessities were produced within the hamlet. Importantly, however, the time in the camp constituted a disruption to this pattern. Since people were confined to the perimeters of the camp, the majority no longer had access to their own land. Some would still be able to leave the camp during the day to go to their gardens, but for many people this was not an option because they had come from a distance. Food would be provided in the camp, but if you wanted to earn a bit of extra money – even to send your children to school – you would have to engage in other activities. As such, many people started a 'small business' or provided services. In most cases, this small business would involve the selling of produce at the market or setting up a shop that sold non-perishable, luxury goods such as sugar, soap, sodas, or clothes.

Even though Pabo is a small town, it had a much better market for such small shops than many of the villages that these people had left during the war. The first reason for this was that Pabo grew to be one of the more populous centers in the region, north of Gulu. This was due, in part, to the fact that some of the people who had moved to Pabo during the war never left. Of the people who lived there, a larger share was able to afford the more 'luxurious' items. In addition, many people were still not able to access their land after the closure of the camps (an issue I will return to in a later section of this chapter) and thus needed to buy produce rather than grow it themselves. There was simply a larger potential market, which constituted an important pull-factor.

Overall, the time spent in displacement fundamentally altered the way in which many people were sustaining themselves. Whereas some still had the desire to be a farmer, others found satisfaction in running a small business. Moreover, the time spent in displacement also led to a diversification of the economy: people had come into contact with different products (think about mobile phones, movies, and different kinds of food) during their time in the camp and were now willing to spend money on such items. Some of these products would become status symbols and others were simply very

convenient for staying in contact with friends and family who used to be close but had now moved away.

It can be argued that the aforementioned developments are simply signs of urbanization and modernization – something that would have taken place regardless of the region's history of displacement. It is impossible to determine this, but it can be reasonably suggested that war and displacement were enormous catalysts that accelerated these processes. Some people might have had more difficulty adapting to these rapid changes than others.

In the life histories of Lucy and her family, we can see some ways in which economic considerations played a role in the family staying in Pabo. Lucy and James both came from a family of farmers and had been farming for most of their lives before they moved to Pabo. Ever since displacement, however, they were no longer able to access land to farm. For this reason, Lucy was now selling tomatoes and homemade *simsim* paste at the market. Regretfully, Lucy told me that she was never able to go to school when she was younger; simply, it was not an option for the women in her village. Rather, they were supposed to help out at home until they got married. It can be observed that many different factors (social perceptions of gender, health, misfortune) played into Lucy's economic considerations. In the end, Lucy did not have much choice regarding the ways in which she could make money to support her many children, and she decided to start selling at the market.

Like Lucy, her husband James did not get to go to school as a child either. In his case, his family could not afford it. After he returned from captivity with the LRA, he spent twelve years with the Ugandan army, so his skill-set centred around military activities. He did have experience in farming before he was abducted at age 20, but he did not have access to land to farm at the time we spoke. He appreciated Pabo because it gave him the possibility to engage in small income-generating activities such as the work he did at the grinding mill. This earned him little money, however, something that weighed heavily on him, because he wanted to provide for his wife and her children. Indeed, he said that earning money brought him most joy in life, but the 25-30,000 UGX (approximately €8) they paid him per month was not enough to buy all the things his family needed. If he had the money, he fantasized, he would start a business that enabled him to buy up large quantities of produce from villages and subsequently sell this to the women who sell at the market.

Casual labour of the type done by James at the grinding mill often came up as a reason for staying in Pabo. Some women worked in a local restaurant or did

chores for other families. Beatrice was one of the women doing such chores. She would fetch water, wash clothes, or smear peoples' houses. All of this together was still not enough to maintain her family. When we met, she was wearing torn clothes, and her son was walking around in shorts that left his buttocks bare. This boy was one of five children from different husbands – all of whom she had eventually left because they abused her. Although Beatrice did not make enough money with the casual labour to send all of her children to school or to eat more than once a day, these small jobs were still the main reason for her to remain in Pabo. In her case, Pabo was the best of a range of poor options.

Aside from those who did casual labour, there were also those who set up different kinds of small businesses. David, for example, worked for the local council just after the time of the camp and later set up his own small shop where he sold sodas, sugar, soap, cakes, and more. The shop could not be run from afar, so David stayed around. Yet, he frequently visited the village he came from. He told me that 'home is in the village, Pabo is for working.' A younger man, Akena Mike, also started his own business in Pabo. He ran a barber shop right by the market. He enjoyed this work and was proud to have established something by himself. At the same time, he emphasized that it was an insecure existence, as the number of customers fluctuated drastically. Unlike the people from previous examples, Mike had never been a farmer and also had no desire to eventually be one. His youth as an orphan in several displacement camps probably meant that he got to know a life completely different from that in the more traditional villages. This can be seen among other adolescents who grew up in the displacement camps as well; many of them wanted to do something other than farming.

Whereas Mike had no interest in farming, it is important to realize that the biggest desire for many interviewees was to have their own land to farm. For those who were too old, too weak, disabled, or unable to access land in their villages, the inability to farm could weigh heavily on them – both because it was sometimes hard to provide and because they could not do (or be) what they wanted to do (or be).

In terms of education, there was little variety among the people I spoke with, as most did not go further than primary school. Samuel was exceptional in this respect and perhaps more generally in the context of Pabo town. For him, there were few economic pull factors in Pabo. As shown earlier, however, he was tied to the South Korean missionaries that lived and worked close to Pabo town. Continuing to work for them meant that he had to stay near –

especially since he did not earn enough money to cover any travel expenses. This was a job that was stable and fairly guaranteed, as his English skills and work experience with the Koreans made that it would be hard for the mission to replace him. Yet, considering his education and skills, Pabo was not an ideal location for him. As will be seen later in this chapter, other considerations for staying in Pabo weighed on him more heavily.

Aside from Samuel, there were two other people who spoke enthusiastically about their education. As it happens, they, too, had a strong connection with the Christian church. Oloo Isaac, who headed a church in Pabo, and Charles, who, rather unusually in this context, had moved to Pabo as a young adult, not because he had to flee, but for business reasons. As a young boy he had studied at an Italian-run seminary and had subsequently worked as a photographer for the army. As a photographer, he moved around the north with the UPDF to document battles, but also spent a lot of time in Gulu town, where he was, in his own words, a 'party boy'. By 2002, he decided to move to Pabo to do business with NGOs that were present in Pabo camp. He sold farm inputs (mainly seeds and chemicals) to NGOs that provided the camp population with supplies for self-sustenance. Charles thus came for economic opportunities. He was still an active business man by the time we spoke, at that time working on the construction of Pabo town's first gas station.

Overall, the excerpts from individual stories show that economic considerations are not as straightforward as they are sometimes made out to be – especially in policymaking – and that many factors, including culture, tradition, attachment to land, gender roles, and personal goals, come into play when it comes to economic activity. It also shows that there is an interaction between structure and agency: the inability to access land as well as societal expectations of gender roles were both factors many felt they could not change but which greatly determined the range of their economic options. Additionally, the lack of education as well as nepotism and corruption limited people's economic mobility. Still, within the more limited range of options, people decided to do different things, and some people, such as Samuel and Charles, embarked on paths that were completely different from the mainstream. In sum, there is a great variety that can be laid bare.

The presence of facilities

As can be seen from the discussion in the previous sub-section, the presence of a bigger market (both in terms of people and a larger physical space) was an important pull factor for Pabo. The presence of a highway connecting

Pabo to other cities such as Gulu, Kampala, and Nimule in South Sudan also improved the business opportunities. Moreover, many people mentioned the presence of a health center and/or a primary and secondary school in Pabo as an important reason for them to continue to live in the trading center; the villages they had fled from during the war often lacked such facilities.

The issue of the presence of a health center came to the fore in Lucy's story. Because of her illness, she needed to be close to a health center. Her illness had a bearing on the mobility of the family as a whole; indeed, James also indicated that they stayed in Pabo because his wife needed to be close to a health center. Other interviewees who were in bad health had the same concern, as their villages were often miles away from the nearest health facility. Walter, for example, who had been partially paralyzed having stepped on a poisonous arrow over a decade ago, needed to go to the hospital regularly and so mentioned this an important concern, too. In addition, his wife had recently injured her back and was now also bed-ridden and in need of medical assistance. People in bad health, like Lucy and Walter, also appreciated the presence of a market close to where they lived, as they could access their necessities without always having to rely on others.

Many people, mostly women with children of school-going age, also deemed the presence of a school important. Some of these women remembered their own youth, when they had to walk for miles before reaching school, and they did not want their children to have to do the same. As we saw in Jane's story, there were also grandmothers who were tied to Pabo because they took care of grandchildren who attended school in Pabo. Brenda, another elderly lady, was in a situation similar to Jane's. Brenda took care of several grandchildren who now lived with her in Pabo. Their parents as well as her husband were in her home village, and she strongly desired to go back there. But she remained in Pabo due to her childcare responsibilities. She added, half-jokingly: 'When the children are older I am sure I will go back. But you never know.. I'm already old, I might die here!'

An important qualification to all the above is that there is a difference between the presence of facilities and true access to them. A complaint voiced by the majority of interviewees was that they could not afford school fees. Thus, children failed to go to school and true access to education remained low. This lack of true access was painful for many parents, as almost all cited their children's education as their main hope for the future. Ultimately, the lack of true access was part of a vicious cycle of poverty.

Even though many people depended upon the facilities in Pabo, they were not that advanced. The health center was no more than a rectangular building with hardly any equipment or personnel in it. There were no facilities to perform procedures or to have people stay overnight. The state of the primary and secondary school was a bit better, but the classrooms only contained the bare minimum even though they had to accommodate far too many children. Still, these facilities were of great importance in peoples' daily lives and can be considered one of the few good things that came about because of the fact that Pabo used to be an IDP camp.

In a perverse way, the latter might constitute a silver lining to the time spent in camps. Not only were these facilities built during the time of the camp, but mindsets also changed. People from various villages came into contact with alternative norms and lifestyles and some were close to such facilities for the first time ever. Through the work of NGOs and through interaction with people from different ethnic groups and socio-economic status, people developed different standards and expectations. An example of this is that it had become much more normal for girls to go to school. Whereas in the village, Lucy was not allowed to go to school, she now knew that this is not universal and she saw her lack of education as a great loss. It can be argued that some people who continued to live in Pabo got used to a certain standard of access to facilities that simply could not be fulfilled in the villages. Importantly, it was in this sense that it was also the people who changed and not only the physical space they found themselves in.

Social ties

A more abstract reason for some people to remain in Pabo was related to social space. Several people told me that they had family or friends living there that they did not want to leave behind. The importance of family came to the fore in Samuel's story. He referred to his mom in a somewhat childlike way – he used the word 'mommy' – but continued to express his respect for her and his admiration for her strength. When asked what he would consider home, he replied that, as long as he remained unmarried, home was where his mother was. Despite the traditional patrilineal organization of Acholi society, lived kinship was coloured by a strong matrifocality in many families (see also Finnström, 2003). During the hard times of the war and because of the missing familial links in the shape of deceased fathers and husbands, many women were forced to fulfil additional roles. This often meant that they also took on a more central position in the household.

Another person for whom social considerations were most important was one of the youngest interviewees: Jennifer. Jennifer, 19 years old at the time, had experienced more than a girl her age should have. She had barely survived two abusive relationships, which had left her physically as well as psychologically scarred and with a three-year-old baby[57] She had recently left her last abusive boyfriend to return to Pabo and live with her parents again. Even though she did not want to return at first, she was starting to enjoy life in Pabo a little more. She made friends in the hair salon where she worked and started to re-build the relationship with her parents that had been so strenuous in her youth. It became clear from her story that there were factors that were pulling her towards Pabo and factors that were pushing her away. Pulling her towards Pabo were the social expectations of her parents and other onlookers, who expected her, as a young woman, to only leave the family home after getting married. Pushing her away from Pabo was her own desire to move away from her parents; they had always had a difficult relationship and, moreover, she wanted to be independent. At the same time, however, she was unhappy in Lacor, the place where she lived with her boyfriend, because of his behaviour. Understandably, she felt like there was no good option and so she did what was expected of her.

Dependency on social relations was also an issue for women much older than Jennifer. Whether these women depended on others, and especially men, for actual survival or whether it was expected of them to be under the protection or care of men was sometimes obscure. Lucy, for example, told me that her husband and second-eldest son had paid for the land they lived on at that point. Yet, Samuel informed me that it was rather his mother who contributed most to buying the land. This can be interpreted as an example of how women sometimes covered up their own input and attributed it to male members of the family, because providing money and land has traditionally been a male task. Some women thus kept up appearances of sticking to traditional norms in order to conform to expectations.

Leaving this issue aside, several women did bring up the absence of someone to take care of them in the village as a reason for not returning. Sabina is one of the women who experienced this conundrum. Her husband as well as most of her children died during the war, and there was no one left in the village to take care of her and to build her a house.[58] One of her daughters who was

57 Her story will be told in more detail in Chapter 6.

58 Important to note here is that this is an issue that local leaders were aware of right after the war and that also received attention from NGOs. During my first interview in Pabo, I spoke with one of the local leaders, and he told me the following: 'There are some category of people,

still alive, however, had bought a plot of land in Pabo and invited her mother to stay with her. Sabina accepted, but not without pain in her heart. She did not feel accepted in Pabo, in particular by her neighbors, who always looked for ways to give her a hard time. She believed that they did not accept her because she was not an Acholi, but rather from the Madi ethnic group. Even though intermarriage between ethnic groups was not unusual in the region, exclusion based on ethnicity was mentioned by other interviewees as well.

Luckily for Sabina, she had a best friend living close by, and these ladies were like two peas in a pod. Not only did they just walk into the house when I was talking to either one of them, they also regularly visited each other, sat outside, laughed, and took care of each other when sick. Friends had been especially important for Sabina during the time in her life when she had felt most unhappy. The loss of six of her ten children as well as her husband weighed heavily on her, and she admitted that she had considered suicide. The advice of her friends, however, was what got her through:

> […] But the help of friends, especially this one in this place, is helping me a lot and carrying me. [They tell me]: 'You are still a grandmother, you are important in the family'. So the friends were encouraging me a lot to stay [alive]. So when they encourage me, I feel at least relief and I feel hope for the future. That is why I am still around.

Akena Mike, the young barber cited earlier in this chapter, had a similar experience. With tears in his eyes he told me that, a few years back, he had considered committing suicide. He was unable to tell me the reasons for this, but it became clear that it had something to do with his lack of family, as he grew up as an orphan, roaming different IDP camps together with his elder brother. He was feeling so lost, he remembered, that suicide seemed the only option. Luckily, however, he had good friends surrounding him, and they encouraged him to go on and gave him advice. For this reason, he decided to stick around. A few years ago, Mike found a girlfriend, and after she got pregnant they decided to move in together. To their great grief, however, the birth did not go well. The child had been born with deformities and died soon after. Mike emphasized that 'losing the firstborn is a big pain,' but

especially women… During the war, they came in camps and their husband was killed, their children died, everybody died. Now they are alone. So they cannot go back in the village because no one can take care of them, no one can build for them a house. So they decided to stay here.'

that they were trying to push on.[59] Considering the hardship he had experienced, he emphasized that the presence of his wife and friends in Pabo were incredibly important to him. Overall, friends and the advice they can give you were important for many of the people in Pabo, and such social relations should not be underestimated.

Former LRA

A sub-group of people that deserves special mention in this category is that of former LRA members. The majority of people who were part of the LRA were abducted by the movement, forced to fight, and forbidden from leaving. James is one such man, and from his story it became clear that he faced specific challenges because of his experience with the LRA. As he mentioned, he feared being killed if he were to return to his home village.

This concern was echoed by others who had been abducted. Gloria is one such example. Gloria was abducted at age 10 and stayed with the LRA for 11 years. She had thus basically grown up in the rebel movement, and it is imaginable that it was hard for her to adapt to civilian life again and to find her place in society. It is also imaginable that people in the receiving communities were suspicious of those returning from 'the bush,'[60] as everyone in northern Uganda had been directly or indirectly affected by the atrocities committed by the LRA. Whether or not someone joined the movement voluntarily did not make much of a difference to many. NGOs initiated some sensitization campaigns to increase peoples' acceptance of those who had returned from the LRA, and, according to Gloria, this did have a positive effect. In the beginning she experienced stigmatization, but people in Pabo had now accepted her. As these NGOs were already present in the camps, it was easier for them to disseminate information here than to reach people in the villages and, consequently, the acceptance was greater in larger towns.

Additionally, the size of even a rather small trading center like Pabo was already a relief compared to the villages. James explained that, for him, Pabo was a more comfortable option because there was 'where to go' for him. With this he meant that there was a social safety net of people and

59 And so they did. In early 2018, Mike informed me via social media that his wife had given birth to a healthy baby girl and that all was going well.

60 To say that someone was 'in the bush' is a common expression used to indicate that someone was with the LRA. It comes from the fact that the LRA always hid and moved through the bushier areas of northern Uganda, attacking mostly remote villages and staying away from larger towns.

authorities (in his case, the church) he could turn to for protection as well as support. Additionally, larger communities offered more anonymity. James, for example, did not tell anyone in Pabo that he used to be with the LRA. Because of its history, Pabo lent itself particularly well to anonymity: it was a relatively new community that came about because people from all different parts of northern Uganda came together, and this meant that many people did not know each other or each other's families and that one could have a new beginning here. This was an important consideration for those who returned from the bush and wanted to leave this part of their lives behind.

The issue of land

Land is crucial in all aspects of life in northern Uganda. It touches on legal issues, it has economic and commercial value, and it has social value because of ties to ancestors, clans, families, and cosmology. In this sense, geographical place and social space merge and come into play in people's conceptions of what it means to be home. All of these dimensions are present in people's everyday lives and all of these dimensions merit elaboration. In the previous sections as well as in the personal stories, the importance of land already came to the fore. In this section, I will examine in-depth the intricacies of acquiring land, and it will be shown how the massive move to camps had a disruptive effect and caused different types of land conflicts to emerge. It will be illustrated that the issue of land has had an influence on people remaining in Pabo after the closing of the camp.

Land tenure and rights of access and use

Land tenure in Uganda is regulated by the Land Act of 1998, to which some minor amendments were made in 2009 (Sjörgen, 2014). The proclaimed aim of the Land Act was to establish security of tenure, to ensure sustainable utilization of land resources, and to create a land market[61] (Okuku, 2006). One consequence of the legislation was the decentralization of administration through the establishment of new institutions to manage regulation, demarcation, registration, and dispute resolution. Yet, as it turned out, the institutions were unable to fulfil these tasks, and with the carving out of new districts these fiscally and administratively weak institutions became even more overwhelmed (Sjörgen, 2014).

61 Many indeed see this Act as an important factor in the commodification of land.

What is more relevant to the current issue, however, is that four types of tenure were recognized by the Land Act. The first type of tenure is freehold. This applies to land that can be bought freely and is registered and certified by the government. The holder has full ownership rights. The second type of tenure is leasehold. This relates to land that is leased for a specific period of time and under certain conditions. The third type of land tenure occurs through the 'mailo' system. This system stems from an agreement made between the British and the Baganda, and concerns land in the Buganda region (central Uganda). The fourth, most common type of land ownership in Uganda is that of customary tenure. In this system, tenure is regulated by customary rules and often administered by clan leaders. Here, land is not generally titled or registered and is held by a community (Tripp, 2004; Denis,[62] interview 17).

This section will examine customary tenure, as 90 per cent of all land in northern Uganda is regulated through customary tenure rules (Mabikke, 2011) and because this type of tenure has led to most conflict (Denis, interview 17). Importantly, the system is not based on legal documents that ensure rights, but rather on rules that are recognized as legitimate by the community[63] (ibid.). As such, these rules can change over time and can also be interpreted in different ways. Still, an attempt will be made below to outline some basic rules, based on the writing of Anying (2012) and outlined in a document titled 'Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure in Acholiland'[64] published by the *Ker Kwaro Acholi*[65] and signed by the *Lawiirwodi* (paramount chief) David Onen Acana II in 2008 as an attempt to counter the new generation's lack of knowledge on land tenure rules.

62 Denis was a local official in Pabo. He was part of a team that deals with cases of land conflict and tries to mediate. I interviewed him specifically on land issues on 10 April 2017 (interview 17).

63 Customary tenure is defined in the 1998 Land Act as follows: '[…] a form of tenure applicable to a specific area of land and a specific description or class of persons, governed by rules generally accepted as binding and authoritative by a class of persons to which it applies, characterized by local customary regulations and management to individual and household ownership and at the same time providing for communal ownership and use of land' (as cited in Anying, 2012, p. 19).

64 In reference list under Ker Kwaro Acholi (2008).

65 Ker Kwaro Acholi literally stands for 'Traditional Kingdom of the Acholi'. It is a central institution that binds together all the different Acholi clans in Uganda. There is a paramount chief (lawiirwodi) that heads all clan chiefs (rwodi). The lawiirwodi resides in a 'palace' in Gulu town.

The first step in understanding customary tenure rules among the Acholi of northern Uganda is to make a distinction between ownership and rights of access and use. Land within this system is owned not by an individual but by a clan (*kaka*). In legal terms, the clan is best seen as a corporate legal entity with perpetual succession that holds land on behalf of its people. Within the clan, heads of households or other leaders are supposed to manage the land, making them custodians (Anying, 2012). The land of someone's clan is often colloquially referred to as their 'ancestral land'. Ancestral land is not for sale and is supposed to be guarded by the clan. There are three types of land within the category of ancestral land: communal land, family land, and household land. None of these types of lands are owned by a particular family or individual, but there are different rights of access and use that are allotted to (future) clan members in line with customary rules.

Communal land is land over which multiple families of the same clan have rights and consists of 'grazing land, hunting grounds, dancing grounds, marketplaces, playing grounds, forests, ceremonial land and other land of a similar nature' (Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2008). Family land is allotted by the clan to a family for their exclusive use. From this family land, the *ladit paco* (family head), who is chosen by the clan or through succession as the custodian and manager of family land, can allot household land to members of his family (ibid.). Since Acholi society has been traditionally polygamous, one household consists of a man, his wife or wives, and their children. A homestead comprising one or more houses is built on the household land, part of which can be used for cultivation. Rights of access and use are at the family's or the household's discretion.

Membership of a clan and the accompanying land rights are derived by birth, marriage into the clan in the case of women, or by moving into a clan area by a non-clan member. Regarding the latter, clan membership can be acquired through living in the clan area for a period of time and being accepted as part of the clan (ibid.). This is in place specifically to allow orphans to be absorbed into a clan. Clan membership and being granted shares of clan land is based on the patrilineal line; women are expected to marry and become part of their husband's clan, gaining rights to his land. The eldest sons of a family are usually appointed family head and clan issues are generally litigated by male elders. Women who remain unmarried should, according to the *Ker Kwaro Acholi*, be allowed to stay in their maiden home. Similarly, widows should have the choice to stay on the land of their late husband or to return to their maiden home. They should also have a choice regarding whether they want

to be 'inherited' by one of the husband's brothers. This practice, however, is withering (Whyte, Babiiha, Mukyala, & Meinert, 2012).

The latter rules on women's rights have caused some to argue that customary tenure protects women's rights. Anying (2012), for example, argued that customary law does not discriminate against women because they, like men, gain rights of access and use through their social relations (as daughters, wives, etc.). Neither men nor women actually own the land. She also shows that women have won court cases to claim their rights as unmarried or divorced women. What is not emphasized enough in her argument, however, is the power that comes with inheriting land via the clan and being a custodian of the land. Women are dependent on men to access land, and considering the importance of land in all aspects of Acholi life, this is a heavy dependency. When the man is a custodian, he decides what happens with the land. This means that the man holds all the decision-making power within a household. Additionally, this leaves women who do not follow the expected life course (getting married and having male children) vulnerable to exclusion from multiple sides. Overall, it can be argued that the patrilineal system leaves women with very little bargaining power – especially when they do not have the means to take their cases to court.

Access to land after the camps

The massive displacement that was enforced during the civil war left much of the land in northern Uganda uninhabited for two decades. The subsequent closing of the displacement camps and the move of much of the population out of the camps and into different parts of the north constituted a completely new situation. Many land conflicts arose from this new situation. As Denis, a local official who was part of a land conflict mediation team, indicated, their office alone still received over 10 new land conflict cases every week, leaving them overwhelmed and unable to resolve most of them. There are multiple causes of the land conflicts that arose after the war and, in fact, the economic and social concerns discussed in the previous sections have a way of finding an expression in land conflict as well. Some of the most prominent causes of land conflict will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

At a basic level, population growth is at the root of much of the land conflict. Even though many people were killed during the war, the population in northern Uganda has continued to grow rapidly (Whyte, Babiiha, Mukyala, &

Meinert, 2012), leading to a very young population.[66] As a result of population growth, land became scarcer and thus a more valuable and contentious resource. This was exacerbated by the increased level of poverty that was a result of the war and displacement. As expressed by Denis as well as other informants, many people lost almost all their wealth during the war, most often because cattle were stolen or it was impossible to take them to the camps. When I asked Isaac – the pastor introduced earlier in this chapter – what the most important thing was that he had lost due to the move to camp, he answered that it was all the family's livestock (chickens, goats, cows) and his physical strength. Regaining access to land was important to many people because it constituted a means to provide economically again.

As a large and often poor population wanted to leave the camps and start building up their lives again, it became clear that land was not as abundant as before. People now wanted to claim hunting and grazing land – which was officially designated communal land – for their own purposes (Denis, interview 17). Denis pointed out that one of the reasons for this was ignorance about land laws. Indeed, according to Denis, this ignorance was at the basis of many of the land conflicts. Whereas some people might have been ignorant, others may simply not have cared about the customary rules; in desperate times, traditions may have been deliberately set aside.

Denis also suggested that another explanation for the increased number of land conflicts was that young people do not respect elders. Whereas elders would traditionally be looked to as those who knew the land boundaries and who would mediate conflicts, their authority was no longer accepted by many. Denis believed that this was a morality issue, that people had 'lost their integrity' and 'stopped thinking about others' during the war. The erosion of traditional authority and the perceived loss of morality, compassion, and cooperation are deeper social concerns that were voiced by many, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

For the sake of completeness, another cause of land conflict should also be mentioned, even though none of the interviewees in this research personally encountered the problem. This is the issue of land grabbing by the government. Denis told me that, during the war, the government would fly helicopters over the lands of northern Uganda and conclude that most of it

66 By 2012-2013, the median age in northern Uganda was 13 years (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2015) and the country's population pyramid has a definite triangular shape.

was empty. The empty land was sold to investors who, for example, wanted to turn it into sport hunting areas (Denis, interview 17).[67]

The final direct cause of land conflict is a result of the gaps that emerged in the patrilineal system because of the war. During the war, many men (elders, fathers, husbands) were killed. This meant that those who were supposed to know the boundaries of the lands that had been allotted to various families and households within clans were no longer there. This led not only to confusion, but also to people taking this opportunity to grab more land. In a turn for the worse, some people found themselves in a situation where their family ties were no longer acknowledged by other family- or clan members for the sake of denying them access to the land. As Denis pointed out, in most of the cases dealt with by his office, the feud was either among family members or between two families or clans. Only a few cases involved conflict between ethnic groups.[68]

At this point, and before illustrating the above with information gathered from the life histories, the specific position of women merits some attention. As shown before, women did have rights to access and use land according to the customary rules, but in the face of scarcity, some clans turned to what Whyte et al. (2012) have termed 'patrilineal fundamentalism.' This has everything to do with denying women and their children access to the clan they married into. This was often done through the claim that these women were not 'fully' married, meaning that their bride price had not yet been paid in full and sometimes meaning that they did not conceive any male children from this husband. Having their dowry not completely paid was a common problem in Pabo too, as war and displacement left many without the means to do so. This was especially problematic for women who lost their husbands during the war: they and their children could be denied access to the late husband's land by his brothers with the argument that they had never been part of the clan to begin with.

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67 It was unfortunately beyond the scope of this research to verify these claims. Recently, Carmody and Taylor (2016) did show that land grabbing by the Ugandan government occurs fairly frequently. Yet, they did not do a specific case study of the north of Uganda.

68 Actually, there was a land dispute with ethnic components going on at the time of the research. In Apaa, a few kilometers west of Pabo and on the border of Amuru district (inhabited by Acholi) on the one side and Adjumani district (inhabited by the Madi) on the other side, the conflict turned deadly. The government was in the process of moving district boundaries, and suspicions arose that they did this in order to establish a nature reserve. See for example this article in the Ugandan news magazine The Independent: https://www.independent.co.ug/analysis-land-killings-apaa/ (Musoke, June 26, 2017).

This also posed a problem for children who had become orphans[69] due to the war or those who were born out of wedlock. According to Acholi tradition, *luk* has to be paid for children who are received out of wedlock. When this is still outstanding, the children belong to the mother's clan. Yet, moving back to the maiden home was often not easy either. Firstly, the rules regarding giving daughters and sisters their own share of land are not fully agreed upon (Whyte et al., 2012); and secondly, this meant another set of unexpected mouths to feed for the receiving family. Those women who found a new husband often encountered a challenge when their new husband's family refused to accept existing children on their clan land that had come from another man. All of the above can be seen as a form of 'fundamentalism' because there used to be space for the absorption of 'outsiders' into the clan.

To come full circle, women could conceivably also be 'half-divorced'. According to the *Ker Kwaro Acholi* document, women are divorced when the dowry has been refunded in full. It can be imagined that in the case of a resentful separation or poverty, such a payment might be outstanding. In such situations, the woman no longer wanted to live in the husband's home, but was not able to return to her maiden home because she was officially still married. This again illustrates women's lack of power with respect to marriage relations and the accompanying rights to land.

It can be argued that this change in the practice of rules regarding land is actually an inherent part of customary rule. It is in the very nature of the system that those rules that are deemed acceptable by the community are the rules that will prevail. Whether or not this narrowing of the rules that has led to the exclusion of various individuals will prevail remains to be seen. As an overarching concern, however, it is important to emphasize that land is closely tied to social belonging through the customary system and the social arrangements of marriage. Belonging to a clan and therefore to an ancestral land is part of people's identity. Additionally, having access to clan land is part of the reproduction of culture. The way in which geographical space and social relations of belonging and identity are interwoven is crucial and relates to the concept of home, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

69 A child is considered an 'orphan' in the Acholi context when one of the parents has passed away.

Land conflict in daily life: 'You find everything is broken now'

Land has played an important role in the lives of Lucy and her family. And for each family member, different dynamics came into play. As became clear from the story at the beginning of this chapter, Lucy was widowed at a relatively young age (approximately age 27). After her husband died, she moved around the north for a while, and having lived in Pabo for more than a decade, she decided to try to return to her first husband's home. She had high hopes in this regard as the bride price had been paid in full and she had given him four male children; they were fully married according to even a narrow definition of marriage. Upon return, however, her brothers-in-law refused to let her and the children live on the late husband's land.

The situation may have been complicated by the fact that Lucy returned from the camp with more children than the four she and her late husband had. She herself indicated that she now had six male children, and that living there with so many would mean that there would not be enough land for all the boys. In the end, her eldest son decided to live on his father's land, despite his uncles' disapproval. He persisted even though they harassed him because he saw it as his rightful land. Samuel, on the other hand, did not feel inclined to move to Cet Kana. As a younger, unmarried man he was supposed to live with his mother, and this was also where he felt most at home. Since his mother would not live in Cet Kana, neither would he.

James, who married Lucy later, was in yet another situation. He was unable to return to his clan land in Pawel because his brothers had already 'booked' the land that was supposed to be his. He said he did not want to fight and therefore avoided going back. Lucy interpreted the situation a little differently. According to her, James did not get along with his brothers very well because he had not lived at home for so long (he was first with the LRA and subsequently with the Home Guard). The latter is an interesting take because it would indicate a new edict being added to the existing customary land tenure rules: in case of long-term absence, one's rights to land expire.

Indeed, this issue was echoed by others as well. As Grace recalled, her parents had been chased from their land in Pogo. The reason, given by her uncles, was that Grace's father had not been in the village for long enough to lay a claim on the land. This, however, was due to the fact that he had been abducted by the LRA seven times and had spent most of his life in the bush. The fact that both James' and Grace's father were LRA returnees is an indication that having a history involving the LRA could be an underlying reason for the

rejection by their families. Yet, even if this is the case, it is noteworthy that the official reason given was being absent for too long.

In numerous cases, there was a missing link to connect people directly to their ancestral lands. For many, the death of their father formed a serious problem. Yet, there were several ways that this could play out. In the case of Opiyo Francis, the situation became very serious. His ancestral land was in Kojo, but since his dad was killed by the LRA, no one knew exactly which plot in the village was his. Moreover, his uncles denied that his father had ever cultivated the land:

> I tried to go back in the village and talk to my uncles about the issue so that they give me somewhere to stay. But they told me: 'Your dad has never been digging here, so your dad had no land in this place.' So, they refused me.

This situation clearly weighed heavily on his heart:

> I am not happy to be in the center. […] But the problem is that there is no land now in the village. The uncles […] have taken all the land. Sometimes they even scare my life: 'We are going to kill you and your children whenever you come back here'. So, I feel like at least I could stay in the center. It is better to stay here than to go and be killed by your fellow clanmates. But I did not want to stay here. But the situation is forcing me to stay here.

The case of Francis adds weight to the idea that rights of access and use also need to be gained (especially by men) by being present and working on the land. If one is absent for too long, then rights might get waived.

Alfred's case demonstrates how the practice of customary rule had become narrower. Alfred had also lost his father, but when he was much younger. Subsequently, he had been raised by one of his uncles, who was also an elder in their clan. However, almost all elders in their village, Obiyangic, were massacred during the war. As Alfred tried to return after the conflict, his nephews told him that he had no place in the village. Even though he had grown up alongside these men, they now used a narrow interpretation of family bonds to deny him access.

Some women expressed that their husbands were in a similar situation, and that they could not return to their rightful homes for this reason. In some cases, the conflict even turned deadly. There were also incidences of women who wanted to return to their father's land but were barred from

doing so. In Flora's case, it did not take a deadly turn, but her story was still heartbreaking.[70] Flora was abducted by the LRA twice and spent a total of four-and-a-half years in the bush. She returned pregnant and lived with her uncle in Gulu for a while. She subsequently married and had four children together with her husband. As she later admitted, the only reason she got married was that her parents were both dead and she had nowhere to go. Soon after they got married, it turned out that the man was very violent. He was mistreating the child she had brought with her from the bush, he physically abused her, and would constantly remind her of what she had done during her time with the LRA.

Flora sought the help of local council leaders and the couple was officially separated. Upon their separation, her two eldest children stayed with the man. She said she wanted to take them back, as her ex-husband mistreated them, in particular the eldest son, but they had nowhere to go. After the divorce, she moved to Pabo in the hope of finding support there from her stepmother (the second wife to her late father) and other family members. Pabo was actually the ancestral land of her late father's clan, so, as a divorced woman, she had a right to live there. Her stepmother, however, had a different conception of this. As Samuel and I arrived at her home one morning, we found all of her belongings outside. She told us that her stepmom had threatened to set her house on fire while she was sleeping if she did not leave this land. Flora was completely lost without a husband or a father to rely on. Nor was she able to afford the rent on another house in Pabo for her and her children. Her case is representative of the situation many women, men, and families find themselves in when crucial familial- or social ties were wiped out during the war.

The old friends – Sabina and Agnes – who were introduced before, also missed the crucial connections that would give them access to land. These women's husbands as well as male offspring died during the war. Furthermore, since both were in their 70s, neither of them had parents to fall back on. For Agnes, the situation was complicated by the fact that her husband also had another wife. Her co-wife had already returned to the late husband's village with her children and was now no longer accepting Agnes onto the land.[71] As she also did not have sons to rely on, she was unable to put up any resistance and

70 Her story will be featured elaborately in Chapter 6.

71 Rivalry between co-wives was actually mentioned by multiple interviewees. This adds an additional layer to some land conflicts.

she returned to Pabo. Unfortunately, she did not feel at home in Pabo and described herself as 'stranded'.

In the case of Sabina, the husband's clan divided up all the land in the village, even the plot she used to stay on with her family. Similar to Francis' experience, she recalled how the husband's clanmates used harsh words against her:

> I tried to go back in the village where my husband was last time. So when I reached there, they chase me. They say: 'You don't have a land here. Because your husband is no longer there. Your children are all dead. Why are you here? We don't need you here. You go back to where you came from.' […] I want to just stay in the village, but in that village nobody accepts me.

After these harsh words, Sabina returned to Pabo because her daughter, who had got divorced and was a successful small-businesswoman, had bought a plot of land there. Even the neighbors in Pabo did not accept her, but she stayed because her daughter bought this piece of land.

Other interviewees had also bought land in Pabo, and this was one of the more positive reasons for staying. Even though many would rather return to their village, the purchase of land was a big step in moving forward. Lucy and James are typical in this regard, but they definitely did not stand alone. Many bought land and built houses in order to continue with life and to distance themselves from land conflicts in their villages.

Lawrence – the market guard introduced in Chapter 1 – was 77 years old when we met. He had first-hand experience of violent land conflict and he felt that the whole situation affected the social fabric of Acholi society. According to him, people did not care much about land boundaries before the war. Yet now, boundaries had become fault lines, and people tried to grab land to sell. Lawrence believed that selling land acquired in this way was a form of betrayal: people were not even using the land to take care of the family or clan. Crucially, however, it affected social relations and people's peace of mind. As he expressed it:

> It affects the relationship of the community so much because now there is no love in the family. You took my land, how can I be happy? So, people now have hatred among each other. They lose love, they hate each other. […] And to make it more worse, you did not use it. If you are using it, at least you would be helping the family because we get food and we eat as a family. But you are selling it away. That means you have the heart of not taking care of

> […] family members. […] You find everything is broken now because of that issue. […] People are separating because of that issue: land. So people are now living in fear […] Almost like the war is still there.

As emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, all dimensions of the reasons why people remained in Pabo after the war and the closing of the camps are related. For each individual, there were different dynamics at play and for each and every one of them, factors had a different gravity. Two factors were underlying the conflict over land that was plaguing many people in the Acholi region. The first was that of greed in the face of scarcity – or, as some see it, moral degradation; desperate times call for desperate measures. The second was a desire to return 'home'. The pull towards a certain geographical location and the way in which this interrelates with various social dimensions will be discussed in the following section.

Home: What's in a place?

What is 'home'? This was a question I asked myself multiple times during the course of this research, not least because I had also left my house and my familiar social connections behind in the Netherlands in order to carry out the current research. It was also a recurring question in relation to the people I met in Pabo: did they feel at home now? Is feeling at home not one of the most important indicators of whether or not someone has integrated? Whether someone has achieved a 'sustainable solution' and is thus no longer displaced? And, was there, in this particular context, a connection between geographical place and belonging? As shown in Chapter 3, the concept of 'home' is multifaceted and complicated, and an answer to the question of what it means to be home for the Acholi cannot be given on the basis of this research. Instead, this section will explore how home and belonging are related to social and economic factors as well as to cosmology. The latter means that, in the final part of this section, a part of Acholi cosmology will be discussed in relation to ancestors, spirits, and specific geographical places.

Economic and social ties to geographical place

The way in which livelihoods and land are interwoven was discussed earlier in this chapter. As the Acholi have traditionally been an agricultural people, access to land meant being able to provide food for your family and perhaps even make additional money. James even tied the concept of providing to feeling at home. He said: 'For me, home is where I can provide for the family.' Yet, interviewees also emphasized that land never used to have commercial

value. As it became an increasingly scarce resource, it was commodified, and people also wanted access to land so they could sell it rather than live from it. This was a new development in the context of customary tenure and ancestral land in northern Uganda.

In a different way, social relations were an important part of making a specific piece of land attractive. Being part of a clan, family, and household is part of peoples' identity and constitutes belonging in the Acholi context. Ideally, this would be given expression through living on one's ancestral land. Being denied access to land was thus something that ran deeper than being unable to engage in agriculture. Additionally, Acholi society is much less individualistic than, for example, many Western societies. Here, it was common to rely much more on family members and friends for help, perhaps when building a house or paying medical bills. Being part of a household, family, and clan thus meant increased security; access to people who would help you when you needed it. The same was true for friends, hence you would want to remain near to them. In a society where people were used to taking care of each other, the commodification of land and the subsequent breaking of families over land conflicts was a radical change.

For Lucy, answering the question of where she felt at home was rather complicated. As she told me: 'These other questions are very hard! Your questions touch people's inner heart.' Reflecting on this, she said that for her, as a married woman, her home would be in Cet Kana, where her first husband was from. He had paid the full dowry and she had given birth to male children and thus his clan land was where she belonged. Moreover, he was the first man she had ever loved, and this husband respected and loved her as well. It clearly hurt her that returning to his home village was not a possibility. She also expressed that, for her, home was where people advise and support you, and that friends can be a good source for this. This goes to show that there are the traditional connections of marrying into a clan, but that other social relationships also play an important role in feeling at home. In the latter case, home is not necessarily a specific geographical place, as friends can be anywhere.

Land, cosmology, and home

In addition to the practical and social way in which people feel connected to land, to geographical places, there is also a cosmological dimension. Even though many Acholi have converted to Christianity, the introduction of

Christianity did not fully replace existing belief systems.[72] Rather, the practice of religion became infused with both.[73] A special place in Acholi cosmology is taken up by spirits, and this is also where the relevance for the current research lies.

Many Acholi believe that spirits – *jok* (singular) or *jogi* (plural) – are present in our lives in various forms. Jogi can either be tied to a geographical location, or they can be 'free'. The 'free' *jogi* are a more recent phenomenon (Allen, 1991). They can be spirits of anyone (Alice Lakwena, the leader of the predecessor to the LRA, for example, was possessed by a former Italian army officer) and they can possess or tamper with anyone. Especially malevolent free spirits (called '*cen*') played an important role during the war and also in the displacement camps as they manifested as the spirits of people who suffered a violent death or who had been improperly buried (Behrends, 1992). In particular, former LRA members are believed to carry these *cen* with them and these spirits (as well as the person carrying them) are blamed for anything bad that happens to either this person or their clan. *Cen* can also haunt villages in which murders took place, and this can prevent people from returning there (Baines, 2010).

As comes to the fore when examining the belief in *cen*, spirits are closely connected to morality. It is believed that bad things happen to people because, when people breach morality, they upset the spirits, which, in turn, cause sickness and misfortune (Allen, 1991; Behrends, 1992). When such a moral transgression takes place, the whole clan is affected. As such, it also becomes a collective responsibility to restore the moral order and to appease the spirits (Baines, 2010). The spirits that are keeping morality in check are not 'free' spirits, but rather ancestral spirits. Ancestor veneration has long been a part of Acholi custom (Allen, 1991), and even though traditional authority has been weakening, some still practice it and almost all believe that it is important to practice it.

Among the ancestral spirits, the *jogi* of past chiefs hold a special place. The chief is also the one who mediates between the clan and the spiritual world (Allen, 1991). In case of a disaster, the chief *jok* or the ancestor *jogi* would

72 This became clear from the storytelling of many interviewees. The majority was Christian (and in Pabo mainly Born Again), but they still did not dismiss the power of spirits. It was still believed that spirits were responsible for any bad occurrences. The stories of Lucy and James show how these beliefs can conflict, change, and be internally mitigated.

73 For more on the fusion between 'traditional' spirits and the Christian Holy Spirit, see for example Allen (1991) and Behrends (1992).

tell the people what to do. If the spirits remain disgruntled, the disaster continues (Behrends, 1992). The ancestral and chiefdom spirits are tied to shrines. These are not 'free' *jogi*, as they are tied to a specific geographic location (Baines, 2010). Ancestral shrines are always constructed under a specific kind of tree named '*kango*'. Potsherds and calabashes are placed underneath this tree. Furthermore, this is the location where the umbilical cords of 'spiritual children'[74] are buried and also where sacrifices are made to the spirits (Odongo Christopher, personal communication, 2018).

The ancestral shrine is for the whole clan. Importantly, the ancestral shrine is tied to the ancestral land. When I asked whether it was possible to move an ancestral shrine, I was told that 'it is very hard to move a shrine' (ibid.), and someone else added that attempting to move a shrine could lead to illness or even death within your family and clan (Ocen Philip, personal communication, 2018). Thus, if you want to reach out to ancestral spirits, your ancestral land is where you would have to go (Odongo Christopher, personal communication, 2018). The way in which shrines tie together geographic location, cosmology, and social belonging has been theorized by Mather (2003). Mather conducted research among the Kusasi people of northern Ghana, a patrilineal people who engage in ancestor veneration. Mather argued that shrines represent a transformation of the physical world into a ceremonial landscape, and that this serves to mediate the relationship with spirits and is integral to making claims of belonging.

In his research, Mather made a distinction between 'places of power' and 'shrines of the land' (as based on Colson, 1997). Places of power are components of nature that are seen as inherently sacred or the loci of spiritual power. For the Acholi, rivers and swampy areas are loci of spiritual power (Odongo Christopher, personal communication, 2018), and these are usually the sites where possessions occur (Behrends, 1992). Different from these places of power, shrines of the land are built by humans and serve to venerate the spirits of those who are said to have first settled in that locality or to have subsequently ruled it. The latter is the case for Acholi ancestral shrines. Citing yet other research conducted among the Aboriginals of Australia, Mather contended that ancestral beings are fixed in the land and become a timeless reference point that is outside the politics of daily life. The ceremonial landscape, then, becomes a space 'where ancestral beings and

74 Children can be considered spiritual for a number of reasons. When they are born with small defects (for example an extra toe), they can be considered spiritual, but the sibling that follows them is for example also spiritual. Additionally, twins have traditionally been considered spiritual children (Okello Ronald, personal communication, 2018).

living people are intertwined, and the past, present, and future collapse into one another. Dwelling in the landscape is not only a question of "being here now"; it is also, necessarily, a way of "being there then". (Mather, 2003, p. 26).

Shrines also become markers of territory and belonging. Since the Acholi have different shrines for families, chiefdoms, and the clan as a whole, these shrines can become emblems that denote the existence of and membership to specific groups. In a way, maintaining a shrine and participating in rituals related to the shrine made people part of a specific group and, as such, created belonging. Being present in this geographic location and engaging with the ceremonial landscape was therefore important.

Overall, it has become clear that land is of importance in many aspects. In the previous section I have tried to make the point that belonging can be tied to transcending social relations or having a place to stay, but that, in some cases, specific lands hold special meaning. In this way, social and cosmological connections to land result in these places invoking a sense of belonging and of being at home. Continuity is also ensured through land, as patrilineal heritage as well as culture can be passed on. As a specific physical space, ancestral shrines have been proposed as the geographical places where bridges are built between the physical and moral world, where the past, present, and future meet, and where (ancestral) belonging is marked. In the end, it is the connectedness to certain lands that is a key underlying reason why people want to return to these places.

Conclusion: When does displacement end?

This chapter presented the first elaborate life histories and excerpts from other people's stories. All of the people introduced are simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. It became clear from the material collected during the fieldwork that parallels can be drawn between experiences and that these can be explored as part of different dimensions. Yet, it also became clear that these dimensions are not discretely separated, but rather heavily intertwined. By presenting bits and pieces of the life histories of people of different ages and genders, I aimed to illustrate both commonalities and idiosyncrasies.

Reflecting on this in relation to the discussion in Chapter 3 regarding the policymaking and discourse that surrounds displacement, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, this chapter shows that the categorization of people's needs and placing them in a universal framework for displacement does not help in understanding the specific situation people find themselves in and

does not directly contribute to finding solutions for displacement. Economic considerations, the presence of family and friends, customs and traditions, personal desires, and attachment to specific geographical locations all interact and create highly differentiated experiences – even within a small town like Pabo.

Secondly, the life histories have shown that there is a fine line between choosing a path in life and being forced into one. This is an important point; indeed, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2010) has emphasized that someone should make an 'informed and voluntary decision' in opting for a durable solution to ending displacement. If this is truly a criterion, I doubt whether anyone who was introduced in this chapter can be seen as having achieved a durable solution and thus as no longer displaced. Instead, this chapter has shown that there is significant interaction between structure and agency.

The issue of home – and the way it interacts with time, place, and space – has been introduced as a multilayered and useful concept for exploring the question of how deeply rooted displacement can be, and, moreover, when it ends. I have investigated the connection to geographical places in the Acholi context, and emphasized the importance of cosmology and belonging in the construction of such connections. It became clear in this investigation that, in some ways, a specific place can indeed hold significance, but that there are also social relationships that transcend place and that contribute to a feeling of being at home. These findings contribute to something I advocated earlier: that moving from one geographical place to another hardly seems a solution to the wide-ranging consequences of displacement.

Overall, this chapter has made a start in showing that the war and, specifically, the accompanying displacement have put almost all aspects of life under pressure. Social connections as well as sources of wealth were wiped out because of war. The traditional authority of clans, chiefs, and spirits has been weakened, meaning that customary land tenure as well as cosmology and morality were under pressure. Especially as land disputes ripped families apart, places one could 're'-turn to are no longer the places they were before the war. And, the people who could return were no longer the same as before they left their villages. Home would sometimes no longer be home, and, conversely, new homes were made. And even though this is not something that can be readily measured, induced, or observed, feeling at home or feeling that one belongs is important for human beings.

Looking into what has kept people in Pabo, at what it means for those who have stayed to be at home or to belong, and at what their hopes for the future are, are all important steps in providing a meaningful answer to the question of when displacement ends. By transcending the purely geographical connotations of displacement, other avenues are opened up for exploring just how disruptive displacement is. The latter is what I will continue to examine in the upcoming chapter, as the long-term effects of displacement are explored.

Photo 10
Rain is coming

6 ‘Families are breaking’: The lasting effects of displacement on social life: *Second empirical chapter*

Hardship and perseverance – these are returning themes in the stories of people in Pabo presented so far. And the theme continues in this chapter. And while banter, play, love, and friendship remain key ingredients of life in Pabo, the stories in this chapter examine in-depth more painful issues that many have experienced. Here, some of the fractions that remain in society after war and displacement are laid bare. This is again done through personal stories, and an attempt is made to strike a balance between acknowledging people’s experiences and looking for explanations. This while bearing in mind that explanations are not always justifications. The focus will now be on culture, gender roles, and marriage. Taking this, as well as the findings from the previous chapter to heart, I would like to introduce some new people.

Portrait 6
Jennifer

Jennifer

Jennifer was 19 when we met, and one of the youngest people I interviewed during this research. I could almost make the mistake of saying that she was shy, but this is not the right term. She did not look at me or Samuel once during the hours we spent talking about her life, but this was not shyness; it was because her story was at times almost too hard to tell. In fact, Jennifer is incredibly brave. These were difficult conversations for me, too, albeit in a completely different (and incomparable) way. As she told us her story, I found myself questioning where my role ended. What made me qualified to have an opinion on this young woman's life, to give her advice? This was a difficult line to tread, and still leaves me wondering whether I should have said or done more. I hope that, at the very least, talking about what she has experienced might have helped Jennifer strengthen her voice.

Samuel and I met Jennifer at one of the women's hair salons in the center of Pabo. She worked there almost every day, together with some other women and girls who had become her friends. Unlike most of the women in Pabo, Jennifer did not have her hair braided. Rather, she had short, natural hair that was carefully groomed. Sometimes, her nails were painted or she would wear some make-up. Her face showed scars, as did her arms, legs, and chest. The first time we met, her underarms and knees were badly grazed, showing white and yellow wounds that had just started to heal.

We left the hair salon and walked to a place where we could talk privately. Jennifer started her story by telling us that she had been born in Pabo camp. Growing up in Pabo was not easy, she recalled. Fires would sweep through the camp, burning many houses, and food was invariably scarce. Yet, what made this time most difficult was that there were 'family issues'.

It started when Jennifer was eight years old, around 2006 – the time when the war had officially ended but almost all of the population in northern Uganda was still in displacement camps. Jennifer remembered that her father would get drunk almost every day and, upon arriving home, would beat her mother. As Jennifer and her siblings tried to come between them and get him to stop, he would turn on them and beat them as well. She recalled that her dad had set four of their houses on fire while her mom was inside and did not want to come out. Jennifer would run to the neighbors, asking them for help, but he could not be stopped. With some resentment, she recalled that her mom

would not do anything to stop the violence. Her mother did not want to leave her husband and instead 'just waited.'[75]

People in Pabo had different theories about why Jennifer's father behaved this way. Once, her father was taken to the local council leaders, who believed he had a mental illness and had to be committed in Kampala. Upon his return from Kampala, however, nothing had changed. At this point, the elders were called upon for help. Their explanation, which seemed to be most convincing to Jennifer, was that he was possessed by bad spirits ('cen'). What eventually helped her father to stop drinking was becoming Born Again – thus renouncing all spirits. For Jennifer, the fact that her uncle then started to behave violently as soon as her father had kicked the habit, proved that it was indeed bad spirits that had been bothering him. Both Jennifer and the elders believed that the spirits had transferred from her father to his brother. A witch doctor eventually healed Jennifer's uncle.

Jennifer was not sure how long this period of drinking and abuse lasted, but it can be concluded from her story that it stopped before she reached the sixth grade of primary school, at the age of 14. She remembered this because this was a time when something significant happened. One Sunday, she was walking to her father's shop in the center to ask for money to buy books. Since his shop was locked, Jennifer decided to walk back and return later that evening. After she had passed by the second time – it was now around 8pm and already dark – she met a boy she knew from school, who was sitting on the veranda of one of the churches. She had met this boy a while ago at the market[76] and after he had checked on her at school a few times, he became her boyfriend.

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75 At this point, it should be mentioned that I interviewed her father, Alfred, as well. We spoke on two occasions and talked at length about his life as well as his marriage and family. At no point during these conversations did he mention that he used to drink or behave violently towards his family. This means that either Alfred or Jennifer is not telling the truth. I have chosen to share Jennifer's story here, however, because I believe that she had the least incentive to lie. Additionally, Samuel and his family used to live close to Jennifer's family during the time of the camp and, according to Samuel, Alfred did indeed used to drink and beat his wife. Working from this premise would indicate something important: namely, that Alfred feels an element of shame about his behaviour. This, in turn, suggests that it is not acceptable to use violence against family members to such an extent, hence he was unwilling to share this information with me. Or, and this should also be mentioned, it could be that Alfred did not tell me because I am a white researcher; I have at times heard the opinion that it is only a Western idea that women and children should not be beaten.

76 Actually, the market seemed to be a hot meeting place for singles.

It seemed like a friendly encounter until his friends (Samuel translated Jennifer's words as 'gangsters') showed up and told her to come with them. They threatened her with violence and she was forced to go to the boyfriend's house with them. Here, she was locked inside together with this boy for two days. She recalled that she was too young to know about pregnancy, but people who saw her stomach pointed out that she was indeed carrying a child. As Jennifer summarized: 'This was how I got married.'

When asked why she decided to stay with this boy, it became clear that it was out of shame. She said that people already knew she had gotten married and that she was pregnant; they would judge her for giving up on her marriage and returning to her parents. Her parents even came to take her home, but she refused. And thus she stayed. After a few months, she gave birth, but the child suffered from serious deformations and his life was short-lived. Jennifer and her husband stayed together for three years in total and eventually had another child together, a boy. Jennifer recalled that, initially, the guy she married was kind and hardworking, but that, increasingly, he started to leave home more frequently. He would go to nightclubs and not come home for two days. This made her fear that he might contract HIV/AIDS. Additionally, he married three other girls. From the way Jennifer expressed herself, it seemed that she did not like all of this, but that it was fairly normal to her – things she could live with. The problem was rather with her mother-in-law. They did not get along, and eventually the mother-in-law refused to let Jennifer back into the family home.[77]

Jennifer was two months pregnant by this time, and decided to move back to her parents' house. Because she needed money for the baby that was on his way, she started selling cassava chips at the roadside. But this did not bring in enough money. Additionally, whereas Jennifer's relationship with her father had improved, her relationship with her mother was degrading. Consequently, Jennifer decided to leave her newborn in Pabo and move to Lacor. Lacor is a suburb of Gulu town, located on the road that leads west out of Gulu before going north in the direction of Pabo. In Lacor, she found a job in a restaurant. As she recalled: 'at least life was a bit easier because I would make money.'

77 Some other women I spoke with also indicated that their marriages broke down because of disagreements with the mother-in-law. The dynamic was not entirely clear to me, but it seemed that the mother to the husband held a lot of power over her son's marriage.

She even found a boyfriend there, but she soon found herself in another abusive situation. Her boyfriend 'liked beating' her. Showing me the wounds on her arms and knees as well as a big wound on top of her head, she told me softly that he was angry because she was talking to other people. If she spoke to men, he would say she was flirting. If she spoke to women, he would say she was talking bad about him behind his back. Eventually, he hit her in the head with a *panga*.[78]

As she talked about this, there were no tears. There was only the soft voice of someone who had taken more than her share of violence. She also said that she was unsure about whether or not to return to this man. I could not help but ask her why this was something she was considering. Her answer was that, in the beginning, he was a good man: 'He was handsome and sweet. He provided for me and even introduced me to his family.' After a while, however, he no longer provided for anything in the household.

The time she showed me these wounds was the first time we talked. When I wanted to meet with her again, Samuel informed me that she had moved back to Lacor. It was another three months before I got to speak to her again, because she had returned to Pabo. She told me that she had gone back because she thought the man would change. As it turned out, however, he was still violent. Furthermore, he now had a second girlfriend. According to Jennifer, his other girlfriend would report on her to the boyfriend, saying that Jennifer was getting involved with other men. With regret, she told me that he would not talk to her or listen to her. He only listened to others and would beat her. It seemed that by this time she had reached her limit and decided to stay in Pabo without him. She told me: 'Sometimes he beats me unconscious. If I die, who will take care of my son?'

Yet, she could not find peace in Pabo either. Her parents took her back in, and her relationship with her dad had improved significantly, but it seemed that she was now quarreling with her mother. According to Jennifer, her mother got drunk quite often and would accuse her of wanting to call the boyfriend she had just left. She believed that her mother was still angry with her for moving to Lacor. Despite this, she wanted to stay in Pabo for the moment. She argued that, as an unmarried woman, her home was where her parents were. As soon as she would get married, this new place would become home. Another reason to stay in Pabo was that she liked the work at the hair salon and that she had friends there, too. The money, however, was

78 'Panga' is the word used for machete. Usually used to cut grass.

very little (around 3,000 Ugandan Shillings per day, which is around € 0,75), so she thought that she might have to switch jobs in order to provide for her three-year-old son.

It was hard not to forget that Jennifer was only 19 years old. When Jennifer thought about the future, she imagined saving money and starting her own business. Ideally, this would be either a pork joint[79] or selling clothes. Selling clothes was something she really enjoyed doing, as well as watching Nigerian movies. Her goal was to be able to pay for her child's education. Her own future, she said, was so unclear because she did not get to finish her education. Furthermore, it was her goal to get married to a good man; 'to marry someone who can stand by me.'

79 A restaurant where pork is served along with some side dishes. Usually a pork joint specializes in one type of preparation of pork; either roasted or fried.

Portrait 7
Francis

Francis, Susan, and Charity

Not far from Jennifer's home lived another family, which I would like to introduce here. The family was headed by Opiyo Francis, who was also the very first person I interviewed.[80] Francis was 48 years old when we met and still very active. Perhaps because he was a bit skinny, you could see how strong he was. Or perhaps because he was never wearing a shirt – something his wife Susan laughingly reprimanded him about when Samuel and I would come to visit. We usually found him waiting for us on his compound – maybe taking a nap in the little shade provided by a papaya tree or weeding some of the greens they cultivated on their compound.

When we arrived, the rest of the family also appeared from their houses, which were all on the same compound. There was his wife Atim Susan, their youngest daughter Charity, and two daughters-in-law. The men had left the family's compound to farm elsewhere. One of the two daughters-in-law became my 'sister', as the family (almost choking in their giggles) ascertained that we looked so much alike. Despite these breezy encounters, it became clear that the family struggled with some serious issues, which gradually emerged as I got to know Francis better and talked with Susan and Charity as well.

Francis started his story in Kojo, the village where he was born. When he was four years old, his mother left his father because he was drinking too much. As Francis remembered, this meant that, as a young boy, he had to move from home to home looking for food. As he recounted the difficult times in his life, I could tell that he was an amazing storyteller; he spoke with so much power and animated gestures that anyone who listened to him would immediately be drawn in.

Already around this time, Francis experienced the hardships of war. He recalled that Idi Amin's soldiers had come to the north of the country at the time he was in the first class of primary school. At night, he would have to run to the bush, but because he had no parents to take him, he would end up in different places. Eventually, he found an aunt he could live with. Initially,

80 Francis was immediately a very interesting person to interview. As the research progressed, and I got to speak to some of his family members as well, I came to realize that he was not always honest with me. I do not say this to put him in a bad light; after all, we all withhold information sometimes, especially from people whose intentions we do not fully know yet. In the end, this behaviour actually taught me a lot about how to conduct research, how to gain people's trust, and about what shameful topics are in the Acholi context.

she took good care of him, but as he grew older and it turned out that he was a very good farmer, she started to keep all of his harvest for herself. He remembered how he would ask his aunt if he could sell some of the *simsim* he harvested and use the money to buy school supplies, but she refused. He would then take it from the granary himself, sell it, and use this money to pay school fees, buy a uniform, and buy books for his studies. But this was no longer possible once his aunt started stealing from him and he had to drop out of school at the primary level.

He continued to push, however, and eventually got married ('So I grew like that until I became an old man'). The day of his marriage was the happiest day of his life. When I asked how he and his wife met and what their marriage was like, he laughed, and then told me:

> When I grew up [and] found that now I could be stable, an independent man, I decided to get a wife. […] During those days, Tuesday and Friday is market day. Everyone will come to the market: sell, buy, sell and buy! So, I also went and even the lady came to buy and sell. […] So, my eye landed on her. She was beautiful. So, I admired her, talked to her, she accepted, and we arranged the day [to meet]. After some period of time, she moved from their home to my home. Now a new family began.

Francis continued by elaborating on the role marriage played in his life, and it became clear that, over the course of the following years, his wife had been a big support for him and that they worked together to solve problems:

> Actually when I was still single, I had only one brain. I couldn't think this way, that way... So, after getting married, […] I found at least a little bit of relief from too much stress, too much thinking of poverty. Because we are now working hard. Two is better than one. If my mind is stuck, I find my wife: [we] come up with a solution for the problem. […] Since that time I began feeling like at least life is a bit easier. […] That is why I could manage to push up to now.

Susan was quick to tell me about her marriage to Francis, too. For her, getting married was a high priority because even though her father was fairly rich, he could not pay for his twenty children from two wives to go to school. As she recalled:

Portrait 8
Susan

> […] because we fail[ed] to go to school, as ladies we have to decide now to go and get married. Because nothing else you can do. Just to sit in your father's house when you are old is not okay for us. So, we decided to go and get married instead of staying home.

Yet, she emphasized that she did not rush into marriage with Francis. In a lively voice she told me how she 'did research' by asking people 'is that man really caring? Is that man really [a] hard-working man? Is he not from the wrong family?' This thorough investigation lasted three years, but then she agreed and the marriage was a big party. As she remembered: 'People were dancing the whole night, very happy! Because the man took money there. The bride price.' Susan left her home in Adjumani behind and moved to Francis's home village Kojo. This meant she was now an Acholi woman and no longer belonged to the Madi ethnic group.

Unfortunately, the newlyweds' bliss was short-lived. Francis and Susan had started expanding their family in Kojo, but then conflict reached their village. On the day the LRA attacked their village, Francis's father was killed. Francis and Susan fled the village together with their children, but in the chaos that ensued the LRA attack, they lost each other. Francis remembered clearly what it was like when the LRA came and how difficult it was to look for his wife and to make their way to Pabo camp:

> So, it began this way. The LRA came from Sudan, [and] they began killing people, abducting people, burning houses, even taking all [the food]. […] They were very many in the village. So, when they come, they find you, they kill you. If you are not found, you are safe. You struggle to make sure you reach camp safely because they ambush people on the way […] Even my own wife was left behind, and people were killed next to her.

Eventually, Francis found Susan, and they made it to Pabo camp. The time in the displacement camp was a difficult period for the family. Like all the other inhabitants, they were struggling to get enough food and water for the family. Francis remembered being surrounded by illness and death. A while after they had settled in Pabo – they had eight children by that time – Francis was abducted by the LRA. He recalled that it was around 7pm and that he was sitting outside on the compound when the LRA came in and, at gunpoint, demanded that he and his neighbors go with them. They walked for days and nights on end, without sleeping. Along the way, they killed livestock that was left behind by people who heard the LRA was coming. While imitating the sound of machetes ('*chuck, chuck, chuck*'), Francis described how people

were hacked to death right before his eyes: 'If you get tired, they kill you. If you cannot carry anything, they kill you. If your legs are swollen, [and] they know you cannot walk, they kill you.'

He did not know for how long exactly he had been with the LRA, but it must have been a couple of months. After this period of time, he decided to escape. He escaped during the night, but unfortunately ran into another LRA group. He managed to convince them that he was not trying to escape, and he stayed with that group. But he never dared to escape again. As he recalled, the rebels scared everyone into staying:

> When you plan to escape and they get you, first they kill you, then they cut [off] your arm. And they call everybody to sit down and they come with that hand. They show you: 'If you escape, we will do the same to you'. […] You will not even think of escaping. That's why so many people died in the bush. Not that they wanted to be there, but what is there scared them a lot. That's why you decide you better stay there in the bush while you are alive than to try and fail and die. So, everybody was so terrified […] [I] also decided to stay in the bush […] because I had seen how they did it to that man.

Eventually, the group was ambushed by the government. A heavy firefight ensued and everyone dispersed. Francis also ran away, and met an army officer on the way. The officer took him to the police, and Francis was to tell everything he knew about the LRA before being released. As there were no services for returnees yet at that time, Francis simply returned to Pabo.

The time when Francis was abducted was not easy for Susan either. She was left alone in Pabo with their eight children; she was now the one to look for food and accommodation. But the worst was yet to come. After some time,[81] it became clear that Francis's return to Pabo weighed heavily on him, and that he had entered a dark period of his life. It took Francis a while to open up about this, but then he told me that it was a period in his life where he was drinking too much. He described how it was a way of escaping his fears, but that it also brought poverty and violence to their home:

81 Unfortunately, the timing the of the period that will be described below is unclear. According to Francis, it followed shortly after his abduction. According to Susan, it was 10 years after he was abducted. According to Charity, her father started 'misbehaving' in 2012 and left the family home in 2014. It is thus unclear when exactly this happened, also because it is unclear when he was abducted. As such, I could not determine the exact timeline through the conversations, also because I could not confront the different family members with what the others had said because of the confidentiality I had promised.

> When I reached Pabo, something began to happen […]. I developed fear. When […] it's almost becoming dark, I began to fear that they are coming to kill, [that] something is coming to kill me. […] So, I have to drink alcohol so that the fear goes away. Whenever I drink alcohol and I'm drunk, I feel peace. And I am comfortable, safe. I can sleep the whole night without any problem. But the day I do not drink, I cannot sleep.
>
> Actually, drinking has brought big problems. When I began drinking alcohol, I found that even the love and peace between me and my wife began decreasing slowly slowly. And finally I found that I became a very bad man. […] Secondly, it has brought poverty at home because sometimes I failed to get money. So, what I would do... I just go and sell what is there right at home. [...] Maybe the mat is there, the chair is there... Take anything which can be sold out quickly to get money and get alcohol. So, that one created some big problem at home, because you find that […] food is not enough and they [the children] live in fear that dad is coming when he is drunk and will begin fighting mom.

There was a lot of laughter between Francis and Samuel as Francis started the story above, even though what he was saying was actually very serious. As he elaborated, the laughter decreased, and so it seemed that Francis did not know how to act. Alcohol abuse and domestic violence were grave issues and talking about them made him feel uncomfortable.

Susan never told me that Francis had abused her. Rather, she spoke of a period of four years during which Francis 'ran away from home' and left her with the eleven children they had by that time. She said that he was 'moving with women,' meaning that he had different love affairs within Pabo. It was clear that this was very shameful for her to talk about, as she spoke in a low voice and kept looking away. Yet, Susan also saw this as part of a bigger problem. She said that: 'those kind of men, they are many in Pabo. And they do like that, sometimes they come home, they stay very well as a father, but sometimes they run out of their senses and begin the same story.' She illustrated the larger problem further and linked it to the rupture caused by displacement when she said:

> Because of the hard life that people are facing here, because they fail to go back in the villages, you find so many families are breaking. The husband can decide to move away from home and just begin his own life somewhere. Moving up and down, doing nothing for the family. So, mothers, they are the one now facing that big problem at home. So they have to look for food for

> their children. They have to cater for the children's medication and other thing. Because men are running crazy.

Overall, this was a very difficult time for the family, and it was clear that the family was 'breaking'. Susan was having trouble providing for the children. She recalled that during this period, she was not able to pay school fees and sometimes even unable to find food. Moreover, she added, 'the relationship between me and him broke seriously.'

Charity, who was 17 years old when we spoke, also remembered this period clearly. She recalled that her dad had left home and stopped paying her school fees. During this period, Charity ran away from home and spent time living on the streets or staying with friends further north. She said that she left the house 'because of the sadness' and because she could not bear to see her dad coming home drunk and beating her mom. Charity was a very timid young lady, and it was hard to read her because she did not speak very freely and at no point during any of our talks did she look me or Samuel in the eye. She sometimes spoke harshly about her father, expressing that he had 'failed her' when he did not pay for her education. Yet, at the same time, when she spoke of the period when he was away from home and she had left the house, tears were streaming down her face.

After a while, Francis was convinced by preachers to join their Born Again Church and to stop drinking. Additionally, Susan recalled how the elders sat them down to tell them that they were behaving wrongly and that they should stay together for the children. Francis's mother was also involved and eventually convinced him to come back home.

Quitting drinking was not easy, Francis recalled, but it was a major step for him and changed his life for the better. He could now continue to care for his family, as he had wanted to do from the beginning. It was clear that family was very important to Francis, but because of the war, he felt that it was hard for him to fulfil his role as a father. As he described, speaking in a low voice:

> Actually, before the war I had a lot: cows, goats, chickens… I had those things. But now because of the war everything is not there. As a father, I cannot sleep. I am working hard. [I am] now taking care of the whole family. Being a security at home and advising the children. In general, planning for the family. Sending the children to school, teaching them the right thing as a father.

What Francis tells here reveals some ideas about gender roles and what he saw as the role of a father in a family. It was very difficult for him to see that he sometimes failed at his job and this left him frustrated. Yet he did not blame it all on himself: he also argued that the time in the displacement camp had caused many children, including some of his own, to behave inappropriately. To his frustration, this again made it more difficult for him to fulfil his role as someone who should advise the children and be the head of the family. As he forcefully argued:

> […] before the war, people were in the villages and the houses are not packed together, they are scattered. […] But during the war, people were packed in camp […] so children they could copy the lifestyle of another family, the lifestyle of bad people, peers, like that. So, as a father it is very hard to control such children. Because you tell him do this[, but] when he is going outside, he finds that the way they are doing it outside is different from what you are telling him or her. […] So, as a father I found [that it] is very difficult to control the children and to lead the house or to be the head of the family. […] as a head, you become a tail.

Francis was especially worried about – or, to interpret his words more negatively: dismissive of – his youngest daughter Charity. According to him, she was a 'prostitute'[82] and would steal from their house. Even though, he argued, she only did it because of peer pressure, he was still very ashamed about it. He had reached a stage where he had given up on her altogether. For her part, Charity was also very upset with her father. According to her, he was responsible for her not having a good future because he was still failing to pay her school fees. Even though she said that her relationship with her father had been better since she moved back home (three weeks before the first time we spoke), her whole attitude seemed to convey that she was not feeling happy and that she was perhaps a bit lost.

Aside from these emotional struggles, the stress of providing economically also remained. As Francis was orphaned at a young age, he did not have a father who could help him access his ancestral land. He had to face claims by his uncles, and even though Francis had won a land conflict case regarding this land three years earlier, they still managed to chase him off the land.

82 This is the translation from the interview, yet I am not entirely sure whether he meant that she makes money by having sex with men; it might be the case that he meant that she had sex with men without being married.

When his uncles used stones and machetes to threaten him and his family, Francis decided to leave the issue for now. Francis and Susan now rented a plot of land outside of Pabo where they could farm and make a little bit of money. This was not an ideal situation for the family, however. Francis also admitted that he was not happy living in Pabo center and that he would rather stay in the village. Overall, it seemed that, even after two decades in Pabo, the family had still not found a way of making this place a comfortable home.

Flora

The final person I would like to introduce is Flora. I met her fairly late in the process of this research. This was a shame because, firstly, she is a lovely woman, and, secondly, her story is very impressive. The reason why I got into contact with her was that I wanted to know more about the experiences of men and women who had been with the LRA for a longer period of time. Her history with the LRA does not define her, but – as will become clear – it has significantly shaped her life's trajectory.

Samuel and I met Flora at her house after a long walk from town. The round house made of cow dung and covered with grass had a pleasant temperature – much better than the houses covered with iron sheets. Flora lived there together with two of her children, but the house was very small. Inside were a few mattresses behind a curtain, a mat to sit on, and a small, shaky, wooden bench. A couple of kittens had just been born and they were playing with Samuel's feet and crawling up his legs. It is etched on my memory how Flora sat on a mat in the middle of her home as we talked for hours and she was able to share more and more.

Flora was a beautiful woman, and one could tell from her face and smile that she was kind. It was difficult to see that, also over the course that we knew each other, she simply could not catch a break from hardship and always needed to continue fighting. Despite the hardship, however, she was still able to have fun and to kindly share the little she had. At the end of my time in Uganda, she offered me a large butternut squash – the colour of which Samuel laughingly likened to my skin. A photoshoot with her, me, and the pumpkin was unavoidable. Because of her history with the LRA, however, Flora did not want the pictures to be used in any publication.

Flora was born in Mission West village, in Pabo subcounty, but grew up in different parishes of Pabo as she lived with different family members.[83] The land where she lived when we talked was her grandfather's and then her father's land. Living here, however, was not easy as she was getting into arguments with her stepmother over the purpose of the land. It was clear that

83 At this point, it should be noted that Flora's story was difficult to disentangle at times. It was clear that she was not very good with chronology and dates, and this results in discrepancies in the following story as to what happened at what point in time. This was not made easier by the fact that she said that the date of birth that was on her ID card was based on a guess by her stepmother. Actually, it could be deduced from her story that she was probably around 28 or 29 years old at the time we spoke instead of the 37 indicated by her as her 'formal' age.

this weighed heavily on Flora's mind, as it was the first thing she updated me about when we would speak. Somewhat nervously, she told me about earlier that day:

> This morning my stepmom came and found me smearing[84] the house.. [She] asked me: 'Are you still smearing this house? You are not supposed to stay here. Why are you smearing your house? You should go and look for somewhere to stay. We told you already to leave.' Then I was totally annoyed and I couldn't hold the anger and I told her: 'My dad was also buried in this land. And my mom. Why are you chasing me from this place? I'm not going anywhere.'

Flora believed that her stepmother wanted to either give the land to her own grandchildren or sell it. Yet, Flora felt that she belonged on this land as well because she was still one of her father's unmarried daughters. Her stepmother, however, was Flora's father's first wife, and she argued that since Flora was merely a daughter of the fourth wife, she did not deserve to live on this land. As we continued to meet, Flora's stepmother was intensifying her efforts to get Flora to leave. It even got to the point where Flora was afraid to sleep at home because her stepmother threatened to set the house on fire while Flora and her children were sleeping inside. Consequently, Flora decided it was time to look for another place, and she wanted to leave as soon as possible. I noticed that this put a significant amount of stress on her, as she could not focus during some of our talks. Additionally, it made her feel out of place:

> I am now stranded. I don't know what to do about this situation. […] Before my stepmom disturbed me, I thought this was home for me. I was feeling comfortable. But now my stepmom is disturbing me a lot... Now made me feel like it is no good for me.

The moment we spoke was not the first time Flora and her stepmother were on bad terms. Flora was six years old when her mother died, and, subsequently, Flora lived with her stepmother and her grandmother for a while. She remembered that her stepmother would beat her a lot. This was also when she was abducted by the LRA for the first time. She recalled that she was abducted many times – sometimes staying for only a few days or weeks. Yet, there were two longer periods of time, which were also most

84 'Smearing' refers to covering the walls of a roundhouse with a new layer of cow dung.

significant. It was unclear how long each period lasted,[85] but it was clear that they had had a major impact on her. The first time she was abducted, she recalled, she was around seven years old and taking care of her half-siblings:

> It was one night that I was there with the other children, children to my stepmom. […] I was the eldest at 7 years old. But also there were other children, neighbors, children who were coming to sleep with us in that house. But those ones they were a little bit older. Like 10, 12, like that. So, when the LRA was coming, everybody heard about it and they ran. Even those children ran and left us. So for me, I was now fearing: if I run and leave these children in the house, then my stepmom will come and beat me. I better stay with them and keep them. So, they came and found me with the other children. The youngest children. […] So, then they took me […].

What she remembered most from her first time with the LRA was how people were killed right before her eyes and how she was taught many things by the LRA. Referring to the telling of tales at the *wang-o*[86] in the village, she described these teachings as an 'oral tradition' in its own right. As she recalled:

> They would gather the young ones together and they teach them how to live, how to go and abduct people, and they also teach you how to take care of your life when you are in the bush […]. So, as a young child, you grow up while knowing that what they are telling you is real […].

After a while, Flora managed to escape during a battle with government forces. She arrived in Gulu and found her uncle, who returned her to her stepmother. Flora went back to school for a little while – she was in the fourth grade of primary school now – where she was supported because of her history with the LRA. After a short time, however, she was abducted again. She thought this must have been around 1999 or 2000, when she was eleven or twelve years old. It was this time that we talked about most during our first conversation. She had not talked about her experiences for long – if at all – to anyone. Her hands were restlessly fiddling with the mat she was seated on and as she progressed into the story her voice got softer and tears started streaming down her cheeks. Sentence by sentence she recalled some of what had happened:

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85 Both likely lasted between one and three years.

86 Place in the hamlet where campfires were made and elders would teach, as described in Chapter 2.

When they abducted me from that village, we moved the whole day without eating.
And even though people are not eating, they are beating.
[…]
People were dying every time and it looked simple… People dying was very simple when we were there.
[…]
But God didn't want me to die.
We were fired on. Even the cap we put on got torn. Even the friend [next to me] was killed when I was seeing.
The commander blamed me for the death of my friend: Why [was it] not me [who got killed]?
I was taken and they gave one of the escorts to fight with me. And they said: 'If you kill your friend, that is how you survive. But if you are weak, you will die.'
But I was strong enough to fight my friend… And I killed my friend.
And I remained.

Flora did not doubt that she had killed more people during her two abductions, but for these, they were 'just shooting around'. Having to kill her friend was a form of intimate violence and hunted her ever since. After Flora had passed this perverse test, she was promoted to be a commander of ten. This meant that she (remember: a girl of maybe twelve years old) had to pass a very tough training and eventually had to lead raids on civilians in the displacement camps. When she got this function, Flora thought it would make her life easier, but she soon realized that it was a burden. She still had to obey the commands that were coming from higher ranks, and she remembered feeling so much remorse over those who were killed.[87] Yet, when she would 'protect the young ones' and tell them not to kill any civilians, other members of the LRA would report her and she would be punished by the leadership.

Flora's immersion into the LRA seemed complete when, by the age of thirteen, she was 'given a man.' This man was 40 years old and a sergeant with the LRA. She did not know much about him, however, since they were only

87 It was at this time, during our second talk, that Flora got a bit nervous; she was wondering why I was asking about her experience with and leadership in the LRA and was worried that the government would find out and come after her. I believe that this emphasized the sensitivity this topic still has today and the way in which some people might feel watched by the government authorities – something that also emerged in other conversations. Samuel and I were able to reassure Flora that this was not the purpose of the interview and to also make clear that she did not have to tell us anything she did not want to share.

together for three weeks before he was killed in South Sudan. It was at this point that Flora decided that she wanted to escape. She told me that the idea came 'like a dream when I was not sleeping,' as she was trying to imagine what life would be like if she would be able to live with her family again. She recalled her own thoughts:

> […] How will I live home? How will I stay with the people who are there at home? Since I am growing up in the bush now with the LRA, and what they are doing here is all about violence, fighting, and killing? […] Then I decided that I must come back home and learn how to live with the people who are at home rather than living in the bush. Because I am used [to life in the bush], I have friends who are there in the bush, everything is there with the life in the bush. Now what if I come back home? Will people also entertain that life of violence? If not, why can't I go home and then also learn how to stay home with the people who are there?

After Flora had made this decision, she asked some of her friends to join her. One night, they were sent on a mission to rob people from the displacement camp in Coope. Flora and her friends managed to escape during the chaos of this mission. They walked for miles and finally reached her uncle's house in Roc village, Gulu district. Arriving there, people must have feared them, as Flora recalled that they looked 'weird,' 'like no human being,' because they had not had much to eat and were scarred and wounded. Her uncle advised her not to go to the Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO),[88] which helped returnees in Gulu, but rather to stay with him and join school again. Flora, however, did not want to go back to school: she had just found out that she was pregnant.

Compounding matters, Flora was told upon her return that her father had been killed by the LRA the year before, in 2000. This was hard on her because she and her father had had a good relationship; she recalled being loved by him because she was his youngest child. Flora was now an orphan. She decided to stay with her uncle for a while and also started seeing a boy she had become friends with in the fourth grade of primary school, before she was abducted. Soon, the boy came to her house with his parents and they proposed marriage to her. Flora remembered that she was not too thrilled about this idea, yet she was 'hopeless' and had 'nowhere to go' because both of her parents had died, and so she 'accepted the idea of getting married.'

88 Gulu Support the Children Organization received LRA returnees and provided them with psychosocial support (IRIN, 2013).

After she moved to Alero, the man's home village, she worked on other people's land for money and reared some goats. Soon, however, her new husband started abusing her. She recalled how he would use the fact that she had been abducted against her:

> So, when I got married to that man, he started violence so much. Beating me... Sometimes he told me: 'You are used to pain because you have been there in the bush. They were beating you, you don't feel it. I can do that too.' I was beaten by that man, sometimes even speared. Sometimes burning even the house when I was inside with the children. So, I suffered a lot in that marriage.

In addition to the husband's violence, she also had to endure stigmatization by others in the village, who would whisper and exclude her from social life. When her first child was born, it was clear that his life was not going to be easy either.

Flora remained married to her husband for six years, and they had another four children together. After Flora had ended up in the hospital again because of the violence perpetrated by her husband, local leaders intervened. The Local Council 1 looked into the case and wrote a letter that officially separated the couple. Flora moved to Pabo, but her husband decided that the two eldest children would remain with him in the village so they could work on the land. Flora took two of the other children with her to Pabo, and one of her daughters was taken to stay with her stepsister. Flora did not want her eldest son, who must have been around 15 years old at the time we spoke, to stay in the village because his stepfather as well as the stepfather's mother physically and psychologically abused him. Yet, she did not see an alternative. With tears dripping down her face, she expressed her worries:

> […] as a mom, I always worry about the boy. […] He is there in Alero village. With the man. [But] the boy is young. Actually, he can't do anything to solve the problem [that is] beyond his capacity. […] Even the grandmother is always speaking bad words, telling him: 'For you, you are just there, you are useless. You boy, you came from the bush; your mother came with you and we don't know even your dad'. So many bad words... That's why he is always crying whenever I meet with him. The boy cried to me so much because of the life he is passing through.. […] Sometimes, I think that I should bring the boy here, but even here is fire. They are chasing me from here. […] Where would I go with that boy and the other children?

Flora's divorce was finalized around 2007, and she then came to Pabo. By this time, the war had been declared over, but the displacement camps had not yet closed. She remembered that life in Pabo was good because there was no violence. The problem, however, was that she did not have anything to live from. She had already registered for food distribution in her ex-husband's village, but his family 'sent not even a single bean'. In this case, Flora was lucky that quite some fraud was committed with food distribution. She recalled that some families, especially those from people who were leaders in the camp, registered additional people in their household. A kind *muzee*[89] helped Flora out and let her use one of his extra names. Flora also recalled solidarity from others 'with a good heart' who saw that she was suffering and gave her a jerrycan, saucepans, and a hoe. As such, she started growing eggplants and okra and was able to start building her life from scratch.

In 2012, her stepmom also came to Pabo. By this time, Flora had built several houses on the plot of land, and she decided to give one of them to her stepmother. Flora remembered that at this point their relationship was good, and that it took some time before it started deteriorating slowly and came to the point where she did not feel safe in her own home anymore.

Flora's current situation tainted her views on what she would like her future to be like. Firstly, she said, she wanted to find a new place to live with her children. Ideally, she wanted to buy her own plot of land and build a house there. She expressed that she did not want to get married again at this point; she first wanted to be able to take care of herself and her children. Once her living situation was settled, and if she had the resources, she wanted to either sell clothes or tomatoes or start her own restaurant. Actually, Flora was a very good cook. She proudly told me of how she was chosen to go to Liberia when she was still in primary school to participate in a running, dancing, and cooking competition. With a big smile on her face, she showed me the medal she had won by cooking traditional Acholi food there. She told me that this was her happiest memory because this trip allowed her to forget about all the stress and violence at home.

The desperation that resonated in all that she was saying about her current situation and future cannot be understated. Actually, she expressed that it might have been better for her to stay in the bush:

89 Swahili word used by the Acholi as well to respectfully refer to an older man.

> When I came back home, I found some easy life. And they welcomed me. It was quite easy. But now it is getting worse. It is becoming bad. […] So, that's why sometimes I feel like: 'Why did I come back? I better stay there. I should not [have] come.' So, it feels so painful and I would have preferred to stay in the bush rather than to come back home when the situation is worse like this.

I asked her: 'Like today?' She replied: 'Yes.'

Introduction: Analysing the long-term effects of displacement on social life

The stories presented above add to the stories presented in the previous chapter. They show some similar issues and hopefully allowed for the recognition of these returning themes. Yet, they also highlight some new issues. In this chapter, the focus will be on the lasting implications of war and displacement on social life and the social fabric that underlies society. There will be an emphasis on shifting cultural beliefs and traditions. Specifically, the focus will be on the household: how have marriages, gender roles, gender relations, and intergenerational relations been affected by the experience of displacement?

In order to structure this endeavor, the concept of 'anomie' will be used. This concept was first developed by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim. Durkheim wrote at the time of the industrial revolution in Europe, and his work was inspired by this transition and its effect on society. The concept enjoyed popularity in sociological writings between the 1930s and the 1980s, but then appeared to have lost sway. Interestingly, anomie is also not a concept that is commonly used in writings on peacebuilding.[90] As such, this chapter adds to the use of this concept in a post-conflict setting as it focuses on the long-term effects of displacement.

90 There is one exception to this and that is work by Braithwaite, Braithwaite, Cookson, and Dunn (2010) that focuses on Indonesia (see also Braithwaite (2011) and Braithwaite (2013)). Their book focuses largely on anomie during conflict and it is used as an explanation for brutal violence. It is also one of the only works that carefully starts to make the link with post-conflict situations and peacebuilding. Nyakabwa (2009) is another work that makes use of the concept of anomie, but in this case it is applied to explain sexual- and gender-based violence during war time (specifically in Darfur).

In this chapter, I will use Durkheim's work as well as work by Robert Merton, who used the concept of anomie as well but took a slightly different direction. From these two readings, I propose that there are two aspects to anomie. Firstly, in a state of anomie there is reduced moral guidance by society regarding what is desirable and what behaviour is acceptable. It must be noted that this does not mean that there is complete 'normlessness' – a term often equated with anomie (Olsen, 1965) – as this is rarely if ever the case in society. Yet, there is less of it or there is confusion about the exact rules. This reduced moral guidance occurs because of an external shock to society. Secondly, there is a discrepancy between those goals that are still internalized as desirable and the means that are available to achieve them. To summarize, and to pull Durkheim's ideas out of their historical and economy-related context,[91] anomie can be said to '[refer] to the problems of social control in a social system. Cultural constraints are ineffective: values are conflicting or absent, goals are not adjusted to opportunity structures or *vice versa*, or individuals are not adequately socialized to cultural directives' (Horton, 1964, p. 285).

My aim, then, in this chapter is threefold. I aim to show that it was indeed displacement (as well as war) that constituted this external shock to society. Additionally, I want to show what the perceived changes in social beliefs were and, finally, my aim is to show what the effect of anomie was on social life in Pabo. Throughout this chapter, I will make the argument that anomie was present in Pabo in two forms, and that this caused intergenerational friction, a shift in the division of tasks within marriage, and has had a damaging effect on masculinities. I will also argue that, to a degree, alcoholism and domestic violence have been the result of the presence of anomie. The accumulation of these factors will illustrate that the experience of displacement has affected Acholi social structure and that these effects can still be felt in the context of Pabo today.

91 Throughout the presentation of the current reading of his work as well as the application of the concept to the situation in Pabo, I maintain that his theory can be extracted from this specific context and should rather be interpreted as a broad sociological theory. This goes against Horton (1964) who argued, among other things, that Durkheim's work was a radical criticism of a specific historical situation – namely the growing importance of economic activity and the arising normlessness in this pursuit – and that this is something that cannot be removed in interpretations. Whereas I agree that it is important to realize this when attempting to understand Durkheim's theory, I do not believe that his theory is solely applicable to this situation (or even that this specific situation is in the past).

In order to do this, the remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Importantly, the two aspects of anomie presented above will be divided and how each played out in the context of Pabo will be discussed separately. The first will be examined mainly in the context of Durkheim's work and will be related to intergenerational frictions. The second will be based on Merton's interpretation and will focus on marriage, gender relations, and masculinities. Each of these sections on anomie will begin with an introduction to the theory. This will be followed by the application of anomie to Pabo, supported by examples from the field. After the discussion of these two types of anomie and the shape they took in Pabo, I will discuss the topics of alcoholism, domestic violence, and divorce in relation to anomie. Especially in relation to the latter, it is important to emphasize that anomie is not an all-encompassing or all-explaining theory; a variety of processes can come into play and contribute to societal dynamics. For this reason, I will also briefly discuss other potential explanatory factors. The chapter will conclude by highlighting the experience of former abductees. Throughout, the stories presented at the beginning of this chapter as well as excerpts from conversations with other people in Pabo will be used to illustrate the various topics.

Anomie and the context of Pabo: The underlying assumptions

The first book in which Durkheim discussed anomie was *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). He then developed the concept further in *Suicide* (1897). Most writings on the concept are based on the latter book, but Durkheim does elaborate more on the concept in later writings as well (Marks, 1974). As a sociologist, Durkheim intended to explain the workings of society and he came up with the concept of anomie to describe the state of society that he was observing in light of the rise of capitalism. Throughout this chapter, however, I will untie Durkheim's theory on anomie from its specific context and rather treat it as a broad sociological theory that can be applied to the context of Pabo.

Yet, before diving into the conceptualization of anomie, it is important to highlight some of the underlying assumptions Durkheim worked with. The first is that he believed that there is a clear separation between man and society. Even though the two are intricately related and affect each other, there is a society that is external to the individual; society exists before one is born and will be there after one's death (Hilbert, 1986). The second important assumption is that man is insatiable, i.e. that he will always want more (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 208).

The two came together in Durkheim's work *Suicide,* in which he argued that man's insatiability meant that any achievement would become insignificant and that this would make him very unhappy. As such, he reasoned, desires need to be limited by something that was external to the individual if man was going to feel he was making any progress at all. Durkheim proposed that it was society that could play this limiting role; he saw society as an external, moral force that could dictate what one should desire (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 209). These rules, which are set by society, should, in turn, be internalized by the individual for them to be effective. Durkheim argued that it is because of these limitations set by society that goals can be reached and that people can be satisfied.

How these socially accepted desires come about or how they come to be internalized by the people living in that society was addressed only in Durkheim's later work. Durkheim believed that, ideally, everyone in society would somehow interact with everyone else, and that this would lead to the formation of goals and norms acceptable to all. Yet, since this would be impossible, he came up with a solution of 'gatekeepers' to society (Marks, 1974). These would be 'persons or associations whose members were recruited from the society at large and served a function of mediating and articulating "society"' (ibid., p. 338). Thus, these were the people who would establish and guard a society's moral compass.

There are some critical notes to be made regarding Durkheim's theory, which are also essential with respect to its application to the situation in Pabo. Firstly, the unit of analysis in *Suicide* was the nation state and this was also his reference point in establishing what society is, i.e. what entity sets the rules or plays the limiting role. Additionally, he first proposed that the national political leadership would fulfil the role of 'gatekeeper' and subsequently proposed teachers (Marks, 1974, p. 338). Yet, in order to apply Durkheim's theory of anomie to the context of Pabo, it must be extracted from its late-19th-century, European, statist focus and rather be seen as a broad sociological theory. As such, I also believe that a more flexible definition of society (and, by extension, culture) must be adopted.

In the context of Pabo, the moral power of society did not originate from the nation state. Rather, it came from a more local level. As argued in Chapter 2, there was a division between the north and the south of Uganda, leading to a dissociation between some of the ethnic groups and a rift between the national leadership – associated with the Baganda in the south of the country – and the Acholi. Almost all interviewees indicated that they thought of

themselves as Acholi first and they also refer to Acholi culture and customs rather than Ugandan ones[92] when talking about 'normal' practices. As such, Acholi society is considered here as the most important moral force and not Ugandan society. This also meant that the role of 'gatekeeper' was fulfilled not by national leaders, but rather by people with locally derived authority. In this case, I hold that it was the elders and the spirits that had this authority in the Acholi context. As elaborated in the previous chapter, spirits and especially veneration of ancestor spirits played an important role in the life of many Acholi.

As the culture that comes with a society is fluid and interpretation of it can differ among various people, it is obviously impossible to say what 'Acholi society' or 'Acholi culture' is and what its exact norms and values are – even less so in the case of an outsider like myself. Yet, in this chapter, I will indicate some of its aspects by presenting my interpretation of the ideas about Acholi culture and the accompanying social expectations as expressed by the people I spoke with.

Anomie: Lack of social guidance

The situation described above, where society fulfils the role of an external moral compass, is an ideal one and was also not a state Durkheim was concerned with in his writings. Rather, he focused on the problems that would arise when society could no longer fulfil this role. This, according to Durkheim, would happen as a consequence of a shock to society. As he put it: 'when society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this influence' (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 213). It is at this point, when there is what he described as 'de-regulation,' that a situation of anomie arises (ibid., p. 214).

Initially, Durkheim's theory was meant to explain primarily economic desires; indeed, at the time he was writing, he was witnessing the 'abrupt transition' to capitalism. According to him, the rise of capitalism incited hopes and dreams of limitless prospects that could, by definition, never be fulfilled. Seeing that religion and the government had largely lost their influence, there was no moral power constraining these desires: society had lost its influence. He concluded that the result was that the society found itself in a state of

92 For most, another important source of belonging was the clan. And even though clans do indeed have some specific rules of conduct (see also Finnström, 2003), it is sufficient for the purposes of this chapter to look at the broader trends that were identified as Acholi culture and traditions.

anomie. Looking at the effects of the rise of capitalism constitutes a telling example because it can speak to society at large and somewhat avoids the particularities of culture in a more localized setting. Yet, the focus here is on Acholi society. And it is also exactly Acholi society that experienced a 'painful crisis': 90 per cent of the Acholi population was displaced during the war.

That displacement has had a disruptive effect has been shown in the previous chapter as well, as it was shown that different realms of life were affected by it. In this chapter, I aim to show that there are still serious consequences of this disruption on society's role as a moral compass and, as a consequence, on the people who are a part of this society. Durkheim emphasized the latter in his writing as he argued that a lack of societal guidance would mean that one could never achieve anything that was considered worthwhile, which would lead to aimlessness, discontent, and frustration. He also saw increased egotism and individualism as symptoms of anomie.

Reflecting on the passing of time: Core values

One need not look far to find symptoms of anomie in Pabo. Yet, sometimes it is necessary to read between the lines. Actually, it was already reflected in the very first thing Lucy said to me about her experiences: she said that she had been 'confused' since the end of the war. A sense of confusion was expressed by other interviewees as well: Alfred said that the events left him 'confused and disorganized' and Jane described 'confusion and panic' during the time of the displacement camp. On the one hand, there was the immediate confusion brought on by the war and displacement, which was indeed more like the 'panic' Jane described. People had to leave their homes in a rush and became part of a completely new environment. In this sense, displacement was indeed a shock for many Acholi people. On the other hand, there was a confusion that some of the interviewees still felt at the time of this research –the 'disorganization' Alfred was speaking about and the confusion Lucy described that, for her, started after the end of the war. The latter indicated that people had lost the solid basis on which they used to make their decisions; some people were confused because they had lost the social guidance they were used to.

Expressions that pointed to anomie in Pabo were most prevalent when interviewees were considering the passing of time or thinking about their future. Most of the interviewees actually remembered village life fondly. For many, this was because those times were economically better; they cited moments of good harvest or 'everything being there' as reasons for

happiness. Many had elaborate stories of how stuffed the granaries were and of the abundance of food. Many also recalled the livestock that was still owned by their families and others in the village – a sign of wealth but also a source of happiness.

Others would rather remember the traditional dances they would engage in or, as Lucy also mentioned, the good cooperation. As a particular form of collaboration, Anthony remembered how, when he was still a very young boy, they would engage in what he called 'group farming'. Here, a group of people from his village would work together in one garden a day and then rotate between the gardens of different households. Anthony no longer saw this level of cooperation and the togetherness of families in the Pabo he lived in. Many others also expressed that they saw an increased disconnect between people as well as a growing individualism. According to Denis, people had 'lost their integrity and stopped thinking about others' during and after the time of displacement. Additionally, when probed on whether people expected any kind of support when it came to providing for the members of their household, many indicated that they did not even expect any support from their family members.

According to Jane – the elderly lady from the traditional Lamwogi clan who was introduced in the previous chapter – clan relations were particularly damaged because of this shock to society. Before the war, there was unity, something that has still not been fully restored to this day:

> When I grew up, I could see how people were united […]. And whenever they call for a meeting, clan meeting, everybody have to run. People were united. Any issue in the clan, they take it as one body. But that thing got spoiled when people came into the camps. But after the camps, they are just getting restored but not fully. You find now people are thinking for their own life, their own family. They are concentrating on their own business… Nobody cares for this clan unity.

Actually, many of these developments had to do with changes in the geographical setting. First, there was the change in homesteads; whereas in the village families would live together (although more spread out over an area), since the time of the camp, families and clans were scattered (although packed together more closely than before). Secondly, the many land conflicts were simultaneously caused by and a symptom of increased individualism. Whereas land used to be communal, it was now a highly contested resource.

As expressed by James in the previous chapter, people who once 'shared breastmilk' would now fight each other.

Matthias, the old market guard introduced in the previous chapter, also remembered that social life before displacement was better than it is now. As we saw in the last chapter, he argued that 'people lost love' because of land conflict that resulted from displacement and that 'everything is broken now' because of this. One morning he reminisced:

> So, sometimes when I sit, I could remind myself and remember how life was there in the village, so sweet. […] and because there is no war, I think of going back and begin also the same, to restore the life that has gone. But you find that I now have so many enemies.

For him, the issue ran even deeper. He saw increased individualism and a deterioration of hospitality and caring for each other that many cited as key components of Acholi society. As he expressed it:

> This community accepted me under one condition. The condition has been that I am helping them, taking care of... being a security [guard], cleaning the toilet, cleaning the hospital, with little or no money. They love me because of that. […] If not that one, they would not even accept me in this place. And secondly, they accept me with words: 'You are welcome, thank you.' But they don't give what they have also. […] [They say]: 'Safe journey' when I am hungry and for them they are eating.'

Many interviewees thus recognized that, at a fundamental level, there was less cooperation and togetherness and more individualism. Moreover, the clan had decreased in importance. This was significant because, as shown in the previous chapter, the clan constituted an important source of belonging. Additionally, the ancestral spirits of the clans were said to be in charge of protecting morality in the clan. With the diminished importance of the clan, moral clarity and the sense of belonging that were normal before the war had now fallen away for many people in Pabo.

Intergenerational differences, loss of tradition, and the behaviour of youth

As I continued to discuss what people saw as Acholi culture and changes that had taken place within it over the past years, a strong ageist component

emerged. Even though people of different ages had concerns regarding the passing on of culture, it seemed that older people had a stronger sense of losing the moral guidance that used to be provided by Acholi society. This concern was significant for them and often resulted in condescending views regarding the youth in Pabo. This caused a level of intergenerational friction as neither side would fully understand or approve of the other. This intergenerational friction can be seen as a side effect of anomie, because the crisis that caused the state of anomie occurred within the life span of these elderly people; they were able to compare what they had seen in the past with what they were seeing in the present.

Many older people were especially concerned that the generations of younger people who were either born in the camp, or who had grown up during the time of the camp, were unaware of Acholi culture. Growing individualism has already been emphasized in the previous section, but there were other concerns, too. These concerns regarded the youth's behaviour, worldviews, and the way they would dress or dance. This came to the fore in the story of Francis's family, where the parents' relationship with their daughter, who was born in the camp, was very strenuous. Jane also had a strong opinion about this. As she put it:

> The children of those days, if I compare with children of these days, there is a very big difference. The way how they think, the way how they do their things, and the way they talk, everything changed. […] They are spoiled. Their worldview is totally changed. They don't see Acholi culture as something important to them. Being the reason of being in the camp.

Others emphasized a change in the younger generations' lifestyle, saying that many young people were living an 'indecent' life. Walter, for example, told of how his children did not want to become farmers. Expressing an opinion shared by many others, he argued that the youth had become lazy; they had always lived from handouts and did not know what hard work was like. According to him, there was a big difference between those children who had spent a large share of their childhood in the village and those who had not. Those who had grown up in the camp were often said to 'copy' a 'bad' lifestyle. As seen in the previous stories, both Lucy and Susan saw problems among young people drinking alcohol and linked this to behaviour they had seen during the time of the camp.

Some of the influence seen with regard to lifestyle changes also derive from the work that was done by development organizations present in the camps.

For example, video halls were built where children could spend time watching movies and music videos. Some of the elderly believed that this resulted in the loss of things such as the traditional Acholi dancing style. This was actually a key point for many, as the different cultural dances were important rituals. Some of the interviewees remembered fondly how they used to dance the *Ayije* dance, a dance which aimed to unify clans and create opportunities for young people of marriageable age to meet each other (Owot Samuel, personal communication, 2018). These days, however, the young people did not know these dances anymore and the elders have not had a chance to pass them on.

Another lifestyle change that was often mentioned – and that is perhaps also related to the decreased importance of cultural events, such as the performance of the *Ayije* dance – was that sexual relations had become more casual. In fact, some would use the word 'prostitute' to refer to girls who have sexual relations before marriage. As was shown in Francis's story, he even used this word to refer to his daughter. Additionally, the rules regarding marriage, living together, and abstaining from sexual relations had become looser. According to some, this was not only a cultural no-go or a Christian sin, but also contributed to the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases during and after the time of the camp.

Another change was that many found that the youth dressed inappropriately.[93] When Jane commented on the way the youth in Pabo dressed today, it could have been something my own grandma might have said to me and my brothers:

> So, they were just copying this thing from the camp. For example, the way they dress: you find a girl is putting on a miniskirt; find a man is putting on the jeans, instead of putting it right on the waist, he is just pulling it down. […] But that thing was not there during our days. And it is not there in Acholi culture.

Perhaps a more serious point, raised by, among others, Oloo Isaac, a 55-year-old Born-Again priest, was a lack of respect among the younger generation.

93 An example of this was a young man I met in Pabo called Emanuel. He was a DJ and computer repair guy as well as a bit of a gangster – on his Facebook page are many pictures of him with golden chains, new sneakers, and in sports' cars that do not look like they were made for the rainy season in Uganda. With his tattoos, shiny jewellery, caps, and low-hanging pants, he embodied what many older people considered 'inappropriate' among the youth. At the same time, however, he was happy with who he was, and he also attracted much admiration from other young people in Pabo.

He argued that respect had always been a core value in Acholi culture. As he put it:

> Before, […] there was respect in Acholi. […] But because of that, I mean staying in camp, Acholi lose respect. Children now they don't respect even elders. Especially the children who grew from camp, they lose respect totally.

The fact that Isaac says that they do not 'even' respect the elders points to an important development: the decreased importance of traditional authority systems. As is the case in many cultures, it was an Acholi custom to respect the elderly people in society. As was also argued in the previous chapter, the elders worked in congruence with ancestral spirits; these spirits were the protectors of morality and would interfere if anyone defied this morality. As clans became less tightly knit, shrines were no longer kept, and respect for the elderly decreased. It can certainly be argued that there was diminished social guidance – at least as the elderly in Pabo knew it.

In addition to guarding morality, the elders were also responsible for passing on 'culture'. As such, they could be seen as the 'gatekeepers' of Acholi society. Mama Collins offered a perfect example of how opportunities were lost for the elders to pass on social norms. According to her, much of Acholi tradition was lost during the time of the camp because there was no longer a possibility to pass on oral tradition. Before the time of the camp and in the villages, people would gather around a fire at 7pm (the standard time for dusk due to Uganda's location on the equator), and the elders would tell the children about proper ways to behave. Yet, during the time of the camp, there was a curfew at seven, and no one was allowed outside their house. Consequently, this tradition perished and an important way of passing on cultural knowledge was lost.

Another important factor in the loss of tradition and power among the elders was that many of the elderly people simply died. It was sometimes said that the LRA specifically targeted the elders, and it is also likely that older people were more vulnerable to diseases and malnutrition during the time of the camp. Intensifying this cultural loss, the war also made it more difficult to gather the attributes that were needed to perform certain rituals and dances, such as for example the leopard skin. As Charles summarized shortly and with regret: 'The social breakdown in the lives of the people is the worst part of it. […] The war has disorganized the Acholi people completely.'

Dreams for the future

Asking people I spoke with about their views for the future was a more difficult engagement than I had initially expected. Many of the people replied that they saw 'no future' or that they were 'stranded'. Even though I pushed some to think in hypotheticals, these exchanges revealed a simmering sense of hopelessness and aimlessness in the lives of many of the participants. The latter was, I believe, partly a result of economic difficulties, but also of a social burden, something that I will continue to show in the next section.

Many of the younger interviewees, however, showed greater optimism as they were making new plans to tackle future challenges. Unlike the majority of the older people, they indicated that they did not want to live from agriculture. Perhaps because they had learned about different options, because Pabo offered other opportunities, or because of the inaccessibility of land, they had come to set new goals and ambitions for themselves.[94] Jennifer, for example, dreamed of running her own pork joint or selling clothes to make a living. Mike wanted to get another job as a construction worker, and Charity wanted to study to be a hairdresser. These are just some examples of people under the age of 25 who were thinking of other options than following in the footsteps of their parents or grandparents.

Yet, there were also some similarities between the younger and older people in Pabo and their conceptions of what constituted a good future. Education was recognized as a top priority by almost all of the interviewees. They wished this for their children and were working hard to get the money to pay school fees. Family values also remained important. Jennifer indicated a desire to marry a good man and Mike said he was striving to be a good father. Additionally, even though many of the young people did not indicate that they wanted to engage solely in agricultural activities, they still stated that it was crucial to have a piece of land that was their own.

Overall, getting an idea of what people see as a desirable, good future can be an indication of the goals that are valued by society at large. It has become visible that there are many intergenerational differences, but that there are also some goals that have remained the same across the generations. Even though some elderly people might not speak highly of the behaviour of Pabo's

94 This is a broader phenomenon and has received significant policy attention. Sumberg and Okali (2013) also emphasized that whereas some young people might not be interested in working in agriculture, other factors such as access to land and other opportunity structures also played a role.

youth, appreciation for family life and land possession remained high across generations. Importantly, it is also not the case that all that is old is good and all that is new is bad. Change can also be for the better, be an improvement, or not constitute a value change at all. In the end, however, it is clear that ideas had shifted and that the traditional gatekeepers had lost a significant degree of their influence.

Anomie: Discrepancy between socially accepted ends and means

In the previous section, it has been shown that there was anomie in Pabo in the form of reduced social guidance, which caused some people to feel confused or without much of the social security that used to be there before the time of displacement. In this section, the idea posited by Durkheim that society determines what goals are desirable remains important, but an elaboration is proposed that draws on work by the American sociologist Robert Merton.

Merton (1938) largely followed Durkheim's lead and also focused on socio-economic desires. His work is important here because he clarified Durkheim's theory of anomie by introducing two key elements of social structure. On the one hand, there are culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests. Merton argued against a 'strictly utilitarian interpretation which conceives of man's ends as random' and rather proposed that the ends derive from 'the basic values of culture' (ibid., p. 676). This was also articulated by Durkheim when he introduced the idea of 'gatekeepers'. On the other hand, there are acceptable modes of achieving these goals. The means prescribed in the latter are not always the fastest way to achieve the goals, but they are the socially accepted ones and, ideally, one should be socially rewarded by achieving the culturally defined goals by using the accepted means. As Merton also noted, ends and means might be analytically separable, but in concrete situations – like those that will be outlined in the next section – these will inevitably merge.

People being socially rewarded for achieving the culturally defined goals by using the culturally accepted means is, again, an ideal situation. The problem, according to Merton, arises when there is a lack of coordination between the ends and means. What ensues is a lack of predictability and 'cultural chaos'. This, then, was what Merton referred to as a state of anomie (Merton, 1938, p. 682).

We can deduce from Durkheim's theory, as presented earlier, that he did not make a very clear distinction between means and ends. From his description of the restrictive role of society as a moral compass, it seemed that it was only the outcomes that were set by society. Yet, implicitly, he also agreed that society sets the norms for acceptable means. Additionally, he also saw a discrepancy between goals and means as a source of distress, as is evident from the following quote: 'No living being can be happy or even exist unless his needs are sufficiently proportioned to his means. In other words, if his needs require more than can be granted, or even merely something of a different sort, they will be under continual friction and can only function painfully' (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 207). It is exactly this discrepancy between ends and means that constitutes the other side of anomie and that will be the focus of this section.

It is important to note that the effects of this discrepancy are felt at the individual level. Durkheim said that one could only 'function painfully' and also argued that, in a worst case scenario, anomie could lead a person to commit suicide (ibid.). Merton (1938) was not concerned with suicide, but rather with explaining 'aberrant conduct', i.e. behaviour that was not accepted by society. His examples were mostly economic in nature and he argued that crime (such as fraud or theft) is a symptom of the dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means (ibid., p. 674). In a case where society places this much emphasis on the ends while the means remain unavailable, using alternative, illegitimate means to achieve the same goals actually becomes a 'normal' response.

Alternatively, Merton presented the possibility of what he termed 'retreatism'. He argued that if there is structural anomie, this can lead people to resort to escape mechanisms of defeatism and quietism. In this case, people still value the culturally assigned ends, but since they have no means (legitimate or illegitimate) to achieve them, they decide to withdraw from trying altogether. I will return to this topic and its manifestation in Pabo later.

Marriage and masculinity in anomie

Having outlined the second side to anomie, I would now like to zoom in on the social constructions surrounding marriage and masculinity in order to illustrate how it works in practice. Both marriage and masculinity are important constructs in Acholi society and, according to my analysis, have been heavily affected by the shock of war and displacement and bear strong markers of anomie. In this section, I wish to discuss some social expectations

surrounding marriage and the division of roles, masculinity, bride price, and divorce. I will show that the institution as well as its traditions have not been left untouched by war and displacement and that there is often a gap between aspirations and means in this area of social life. In subsequent sections, I will use these findings to make the case that anomie can be seen as one of the factors that contributed to high levels of alcohol abuse and domestic violence in Pabo during and after the time of the displacement camps.

The importance of marriage

When asking people about their life histories, there was always a relatively large focus on their relationship with their significant other. Marriage was considered of great importance and a major steppingstone in life. Within this, there was a strong heteronormativity, which was reinforced by national legislation making homosexuality illegal.[95]

Noticing that many people brought up the issue of marriage by themselves, I got into the habit of asking them how they met their current husband or wife. Interestingly, this question was often met with a lot of giggling (also from Samuel). The short answer – somewhat defying my expectations of great love stories – was almost always: 'I found her at the market' or 'he found me at the market.' Some people would elaborate, like Francis in his story at the beginning of this chapter, recalling the encounter in greater detail. It seemed, however, that the market was the best place to meet other single people. And that men were the ones to do the finding. As this reaction shows and as will be illustrated in greater detail below, the motivations for the people I spoke with to get married were rather different from those most often cited in a Western context. Whereas in the West, there is often an emphasis on love, romance, or chemistry, these did not seem to be the reasons to enter into marriage for the people I spoke with. Marriage was more of a partnership – it was meant to provide social status, economic security, and belonging.

That marriage implied social status is best illustrated by Lawrence. His happiest memory from his village Odokonyero was the day he got married:

95 As this research did not specifically regard same-sex sexuality, and because homosexuality is illegal in Uganda, I did not delve further into this topic. No one I interviewed brought the subject up. This is not surprising because, even in private conversations with friends, the topic was quickly considered uncomfortable or even dangerous. Even though I have no doubt same-sex sexuality exists in Pabo, the only accepted marriage in this context was between a man and a woman and, as such, this is the topic of this section of the chapter.

> The day that I got a wife, I was very happy. To get the wife. Why? Because […] they remove my name from the singles to the married. So people respect me.

As illustrated here, people gained respect when they were married. This is because getting married signified coming of age; becoming a man or a woman instead of remaining a boy or a girl.[96] This was also subtly indicated by Francis in his story presented at the beginning of this chapter: he said that he grew up until he was 'an old man', i.e. the moment he got married. Surely, the coming of age had to be solidified by becoming a parent as well. For many, the moment of coming of age would come when they were still teenagers, with some women getting married as young as 14.[97] As the majority of the people I spoke with did not leave home to study, getting married was also the first time they became independent, leaving the parental home.

Another factor determining when people married was economic security. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Lucy said on multiple occasions that she got married because life had become difficult and she could not provide for her boys; having a husband would help her achieve this. Other women echoed this sentiment and it also came to the fore in Francis and Susan's story. They argued that marriage could provide economic security because it allowed people to come together and find solutions for problems in the family. Overall, economic security is a valid point because either two can provide an income or the couple can devise a division of labour between the home and for example the field.

Moreover, there is the consideration of access to land. As indicated in the previous chapter, men would become custodians of a piece of clan land upon marriage, and for women marriage was the easiest way of accessing land as well. Having access to land was a vital economic concern that could thus be secured through marriage. As a next step, it would be important to have many children – especially male children – as this ensured that a large share of the clan land would remain in the hands of your family. Whereas girls

96 Dolan (2003) found that Acholi society is highly ageist, and that children are not considered to have an important voice. This explains why becoming a man or a woman was important in gaining respect.

97 Actually, getting married at a very young age was not uncommon among the older interviewees. Yet, in general, it was not surprising that people married and had children at a younger age than in many Western countries, also because Uganda's life expectancy is fairly low: 60 years for men and 65 years for women in 2016 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018).

would get married and move away, boys signified more access to land and thus more power.

Related to land, but not exclusively determined by it was the issue of belonging. As women married, they joined a different clan. Getting married thus constituted a new form of belonging, as they would then be part of a new family. This was of specific significance for women who had lost many family members. Flora, for example, indicated that her main motivation to get married after her return from the bush was that she 'had nowhere to go.' In her case, getting married meant that she would again be a member of a family, of a community. Overall, both men and women indicated that starting their married life was like a new beginning.

Gender roles in marriage

Within the partnerships that were formed for these various reasons, there was a clear ideal division of tasks. First and foremost, the husband was in charge of providing economically for his family. He was to care for the family by providing food, medication, material goods, and money for educating the children. Moreover, the husband was usually in charge of making sure that there was a place to live and that the main structure(s) were built, for which the women would then prepare the grass roofing.

Mama Collins, a young mother of four, captured this sentiment perfectly as she told me that marriage was good 'when he comes home with a smile and a black *caverra*.'[98] This sentiment was echoed by a lot of women, and conveyed the idea that the main task of the man was to provide.

The men I spoke with about the roles in marriage also agreed with this conception. Mike, a young man who lost a baby during the time of this research, was again expecting to be a father when we met for the last time. Whereas he had been very depressed after his first baby died, he was now very excited. He had finished building the family's new house and had taken up farming on top of running his barbershop. I asked him what he thought his duties as a father would be when the baby arrived. The first thing he mentioned was that he 'will need to provide'. He said he needed to 'show that he is a father' by 'providing everything, making him happy.' In addition to this central role, he said he would also 'need to show him or her love.'

98 A 'caverra' is the term used for plastic bags. In this case, she meant the black plastic bags that were used in shops and at the market to put groceries in.

The issue also featured strongly in Francis's story, as he expressed that he needed to take care of the family and was responsible for sending the children to school. His daughter Charity echoed this expectation even though she thought her father had failed in this respect. Francis also said that it was his task to 'advise the children' and to 'teach them the right thing.' Offering guidance was mentioned by more fathers as well as mothers and thus seemed like a shared task. Reflecting on what made him happy and also giving an insight into the tasks of women, Walter told me the following:

> As a father, I feel very happy and [I] enjoy when I provide for the family. […] Because with women, they just look at the utensils at home, in the house, so, as a man, if I could provide those ones, I would be very happy.

As this statement makes clear, the main tasks of (married) women centred around the homestead. As Mama Collins also explained, women were to take care of the children, cook, wash, clean the house, and receive guests. Susan agreed with this division of labour and expressed that it was her main task in life to raise the children. Some women and men believed that another important task of women was to be obedient to their husbands – if she was not, he could very well leave her.

Masculinity

Getting married, having children, and fulfilling the socially expected role of a husband and father were important markers of masculinity. In this section, I would like to elaborate on the position of men in Acholi society and the associated expectations of masculinity.

At the same time, however, masculinity cannot be discussed without taking women into account. Given that a man needs to get married, have children, and take care of his family, it is clear that none of this can be done without a woman. The gender roles in the Acholi context were constitutive of each other and tended towards mutual exclusivity. In a (limited) study into the normative model of masculinity in northern Uganda, Dolan (2003) also found that it was generally assumed that men and women were different. To go even further, many saw women as weaker and a burden or as children, without any knowledge or skills. According to Dolan, this was sometimes backed up by citing the Bible, in which it was written that the woman was created from the man and was the 'weaker vessel' (as quoted in Dolan, 2003). Overall, men were seen as more valuable and more capable. This meant that

men were higher up in the social hierarchy than women, but it also implied great expectations.

There were tangible ways in which these ideas were expressed and maintained. Firstly, in some cases, male superiority was solidified at a young age as some boys were given preference in going to school. This could be because parents did not have the financial means to send all their children to school, or it could be because some believed that a woman would become 'too expensive', as the bride price would increase as a woman's level of education increased. The flipside to this, however, was also that a family could see a girl's education as an investment in terms of getting a higher bride price later on.

There was also the concrete reality of male superiority when it came to positions of power. Women were allowed to become members of the Local Council, but they remained significantly outnumbered by men. In terms of traditional leadership, however, there was no possibility of women becoming clan leaders or (paramount) chief; these all followed the patrilineal line of descent. The space where women did have superiority was the traditional spiritual world, as it was said that women were closer to this world (also see Behrends, 1992). There was an effect of the lack of women in (traditional) leadership positions on marriage, as divorce without consent of the husband needed to be granted by either one of the leadership structures; without women in these positions, their plight was probably less understood.

The patrilineal structure of Acholi society also affected land ownership, as detailed in the previous chapter. As the man was always the custodian of the land – the family's most important asset – he also had more leverage, both within marriage and to the outside world.

Finally, the tradition of paying a bride price also indicated the relative position of men and women in society. Even though some argued that the bride price was a merely symbolic interaction between two families to solidify the bond and affirm commitment, I do believe it had real effects on the relationship between a husband and a wife. As the man was the one who paid to get a woman, it created inequality and indebtedness from the outset.

Additionally, it meant that having multiple wives became a status symbol; it was a way of showing that you were able to afford the bride price of more than one woman. Polygamy was not a problem for all people, yet some of the women I spoke with who were in a polygamous marriage told me that they did not have a good relationship with their co-wives and that this put

a lot of strain on their marriage. Yet, these women had no say in this. The problems between co-wives were often intensified because of the hierarchy that was involved: the earlier you had joined the family, the more power and rights you and your (male) children held within the family. The latter came to the fore in Flora's case, as her stepmother (her father's first wife) argued that because Flora was a child from a later wife, she had no rights to access her father's land. Having multiple wives was not easy for the husband either; it became clear that it was not an easy task to divide his time and attention. Additionally, Isaac pointed out that polygamy led to the rapid spread of STDs and also meant that men would often have more children than they could actually provide for.

I would also like to cite Samuel's reflections on the bride price. Samuel told me that the tradition of paying a bride price had the effect that 'a woman becomes as a property at home instead of as a human being who has a personality.' According to him, this meant that some men thought they could treat their wife any way they wanted – after all, she had become his property. The effect of the bride price on women was, he said, that they would become more submissive and not speak out. In fact, Ojok Anthony expressed that he thought women should be 'humble and quiet.' Yet, this relative position of women is not only due to the traditions surrounding bride price. It should be noted, too, that women did not become passive victims. As Samuel also emphasized, government and NGO sensitization programmes as well as access to the internet had increased many women's ability to access information and speak up. Additionally, the rate of divorce – an issue I will return to later in this chapter – also suggested female agency as well as a break with a tradition of seeing divorce as impossible or unforgiveable.

Expectations vs. reality

In the latter two sub-sections, some important ideals regarding masculinity and the division of roles within marriage have been outlined. Living up to these ideals, however, was not always easy or even possible. This was of graver concern for some more than others.

Many of the women I spoke with told me that their husband did not provide for the family in full or at all. In fact, almost all women fulfilled an important role when it came to providing. Of the women I spoke with, only the significantly older women (70+ years) did not engage in any income-generating activities. For some of the women it was not a problem to share the burden of generating income. Yet for others, especially those who had a husband who did not

provide at all, it was very problematic and the double workload caused a lot of stress or would make some women feel like they were not able to take proper care of their children and thus fulfil their 'original' role.

In order to share the burden of providing for the family, most women would work on the land, sell produce at the market, or cook at a restaurant. In the case of Francis and Susan, for example, the couple would go to the garden together almost every day, although Francis would sometimes stay a while longer when Susan had returned home to prepare food together with her daughters and daughters-in-law. Overall, it seemed that men were struggling to provide and that women stepped in, but that men would usually not take up the tasks that were traditionally designated to women. As Mama Collins added, after explaining the ideal division of labour in the household to me:

> In this place, the role of men and women get mixed up. Men do not fulfil their duties, so women have to do this as well.

As has become clear throughout this book, providing economically in the context of Pabo was often a troublesome task. Many people were not educated and were dependent on farming. Yet, many men were engaged in land conflict and thus unable to access the land they always expected they would. Added to this, many people lost their livestock during the war and thus another source of wealth and income. Some of the men would get very emotional when talking about this loss of livestock, tearing up, or expressing that it 'pained' them that this had been taken away from their families. This also emerged in Francis' story, presented earlier, and it was clear that he was worried about being able to provide for his family and that it was a source of stress ('no sleep') that he was sometimes unable to do this.

Other men expressed that high expectations placed a heavy burden on them mentally and physically. Many of the men who said this were, like Francis, healthy and not particularly old. Yet, for those who had physical limitations, it was even harder. Walter, a 55-year-old man who sustained an injury during the time of the camp that left him disabled, expressed that it started during the time of the camp, where he 'found it hard, as a father, to provide.' This worry never went away, and because of his physical limitations the burden only became worse:

> I am still worried about my future because I am weak now. And the strength of the family depends on my strength as a father. So now [that] I am weak, I even expect the future of my family to be weak. […] So, I am so worried

> about my future and the future of the family because of my disability. […] And I wish [that] I could manage to pay all my children to school, the high level of education, then they will take where I stopped. They will move on with the family. But now I can't make it to my expectation.

It was especially heavy in the case of Lawrence, the 77-year-old man living at the market. He cleaned the public toilets and the health centre during the day and worked as a security guard at the market at night. He told me that the work as a night guard was dangerous at his age and that he was barely able to make a living from this. Yet, he had to keep going because he wanted to be accepted by the community and provide for his wife and children. He expressed his struggle and his worry to me:

> So, when I reflect home, back home, I find that they need me a lot. And especially the wife, who is very weak, needs my help. And I am struggling hard to support her and the children who are not married, but they need the money so that they can also get married, get the wives. I ask myself: 'Where will I get the money?'. [That] sometimes makes me unhappy. And makes me to think a lot and struggle a lot.

It is significant that Lawrence brought up the fact that he needed money for his unwed sons, as this reiterates the topic of bride price. Ideally, the bride price would be paid by the man's family or clan as a whole, from the livestock that they owned. Yet, as both the LRA and the government army stole a lot of livestock during the war and as the move to camp made it impossible to keep the animals that were still there, the Acholi were largely left without this source of wealth. This gravely affected the ability of men to pay a bride price – much to the dismay of some of the older people I spoke with and to the frustration of those who remained indebted.

The amount to be paid by the husband to his future wife's family varied. And with the demise of livestock possession, the form it could take changed as well. One young man I spoke with, William, was struggling to pay the bride price. He was 33 years old and he and his wife had been married for several years, but since he had still not been able to pay the bride price in full, the wife's family had decided that she must move back home until he had done so. According to William, the bride price consisted of: 2.5 million Ugandan Shillings (approximately €600), 2 cows, 10 goats, 25 chickens, 100 kilograms of sugar, a shirt for the father, a dress for the mother, shoes, 10 litres of paraffin

oil, and 1.3 million Ugandan Shillings for 'spoiling her education.'[99] The latter had to be paid because they got married when his wife was 19 years old and still in school.

William mostly worked in construction but was a trained tailor. As he was unable to find a job in construction, he was working here and there as a tailor and also growing some crops which he was hoping to harvest and sell in a few months. With only this casual labour to rely on, it was difficult for him to get all the money and goods together to pay the bride price. This was difficult for him, because he was 'missing her so much' and also missed their daughter. He remained optimistic, however, as he believed that he 'could bargain' on the price.

William was not the only young man struggling with this issue. Mike and his girlfriend, for example, were not officially married. To my surprise, tears welled up in his eyes when he told me that he really wanted to get married traditionally, but that a lack of money was preventing him from doing so. Mike's and William's experiences go to show that there are high, internalized expectations for (young) men when it comes to marriage, and that being unable to meet these expectations because of a lack of money can lead to a lot of stress.

The final discrepancy I would like to highlight here relates to the shift in cultural understanding that was discussed before. Isaac, for example, told me that: 'Teaching children became very hard. Because you find a child can copy a life [style] from someone and try to practice it. So, as a father, [it was] very hard to teach such children.' A concrete example of this was the struggle between Charity and her parents. What seemed to have happened was that the time in the camp caused the two generations to grow further apart, making it harder to fulfil the task of teacher or social guide – both for the fathers and the mothers in Pabo.

99 The only example of a pre-war bride price I obtained during the research was that of Sabina (interview 25). As she was now in her 70s, I suppose she got married approximately 50 years ago. Her bride price consisted of 8 cows, a dress for her mother, and a suit for her father. She did not mention any monetary transaction, but she might have been incomplete in her enumeration. She did, however, laughingly remember the big party that was thrown during which a goat was slaughtered and 'so many jerrycans of alcohol' were drunk. Additionally, she expressed great concern for the fact that I, like other women in the Netherlands, would consider 'marrying for free.'

Overall, there was a mental and physical burden on both partners in marriage. Women, on the one hand, were often faced with men who were unable or unwilling to provide for the family. This meant that these women had to take on additional tasks while receiving little help with the work at home. This made many feel alone and exhausted. Men, on the other hand, were struggling with societal expectations that were often impossible to fulfil. Many men felt like they were failing their wives, children, themselves, and social expectations. In a society where men were hierarchically above women and where it was important to be a masculine man, it was often difficult to come to terms with such a failure and, consequently, to be considered less of a man. This had a deep impact as it related to one's identity and social acceptance.

Anomie trickling down

The previous section reveals that struggles that may have seemed individual at first glance were actually tied to broader issues of gender relations and marriage. This came to the fore relatively early in the research, and it was Susan, my second interviewee, who first brought the issue to my attention. She told me about the lingering effect of displacement and the subsequent inability to return to their villages on many people's marriage. To reiterate an extract from her individual story, originally presented at the beginning of this chapter:

> Because of the hard life that people are facing here, because they fail to go back in the villages, you find so many families are breaking. The husband can decide to move away from home and just begin his own life somewhere. Moving up and down, doing nothing for the family. So, mothers, they are the one now facing that big problem at home. So they have to look for food for their children. They have to cater for the children's medication and other things. Because men are running crazy.

Susan was quick to add that it was not only the men who were 'running crazy'; women also seemed to go astray sometimes. According to her, if life became too hard, women would abandon their children and work as prostitutes or move from 'husband' to 'husband' to find someone to provide for them. She explained that this was a common phenomenon and, convinced, she added: '[…] that is what is real in this place. Not a story, it is happening.'

As was perhaps obvious from her conviction, and what emerged as she continued her story was that she had personally experienced this. In fact,

Susan's story, as presented earlier in this chapter, highlighted difficulties that many women in Pabo experienced. Her conviction that people were 'running crazy' suggested that they were not complying with the societal expectations that she had internalized. But in the stories of other women, too, 'moving up and down' or 'not being stable at home' became euphemisms for men who would fail to provide, not come home at night, have extramarital relations, drink too much alcohol, abandon their children, or beat their wives. These behaviours will receive more attention in the remainder of this section.

Retreatism

One of the reactions to the forms of anomie that have been outlined above was retreatism. This option, as described by Merton (1938), refers to people who find a way of withdrawing from society as they have no way of reaching the socially proscribed goals. Here, I suggest that alcoholism was one such example of this and an option for some people, specifically men, in Pabo. This had a direct impact on their families as it prevented them from providing and often resulted in them becoming a liability. As was highlighted in Francis's story, he would take anything he could find from the house and sell it in order to be able to buy alcohol. Other women who were or had been with men who had problems with alcohol, which was indeed a fair share, reported similar behaviour and expressed how damaging it was to the family's ability to survive and, e.g. to pay the children's school fees. If alcoholism is seen as a result of frustration over not being able to provide, it is also a behaviour that reinforces this inability – thus instating a vicious circle.

I believe that there are three main lines of thinking that can be followed to explain why it were the men who had a higher tendency to turn to alcohol. The first is that it was more socially acceptable for men to drink; it was sometimes considered inappropriate for women to consume alcohol. This acceptance could sometimes also turn into peer pressure. Secondly – and this was often mentioned in relation to the time in the camp – the division of roles in marriage meant that the man was often the one who had nothing to do during the day. The man was supposed to go out and work in the field to provide for his family, yet during the time of the camp people were not allowed to go back to the villages where they had land. Men were thus forced to stay inside the camp. At the same time, the women still had their traditional tasks to fulfil around the homestead. In the end, this meant that many men were confronted with idleness and boredom, and drinking with friends seemed like a good pastime to some. Even during the time of this research, the inability to access land and a high level of unemployment meant

that men could often be found drinking small sachets of hard liquor outside one of Pabo's many small bars.

The final reason is related to the point I aimed to make with the discussion of masculinity in Acholi society: the man's more prominent role meant that they experienced a much harsher blow if they failed to live up to expectations. As a result, some men would turn to alcohol to 'forget' or 'relieve the stress' of their everyday lives. It was not easy to get men to talk about alcohol use and this also meant that a lot of information might have been incorrect or lacking. Jennifer's father, for example, did not mention this at any point during our talks (and I could not ask about it due to my confidentiality agreement with Jennifer).

As was seen before, however, Francis opened up about the reasons for his past alcohol abuse. Even though Francis and his wife did not agree on the time period during which he was drinking too much, it became clear that, in either case, it was a way for him to escape reality. The same was the case for Charles. He was 47 years old by the time we spoke, had been married for over twenty years and had four children with his wife, but was yet to pay the bride price in full. His wife had taken the children and left him one year ago because, according to him, she was pressured by her parents (who wanted to see the remainder of the bride price) and hurt because he was so focused on work and often away. What he said showed how the pressures of 'being a man' affected Charles and his marriage:

> The thing is the nature of my work. I move so long, sometimes I stay away like 6 months, 7 months, 8 months. […] So, I think that distance between us caused us that friction. Because I became too attached to making money to take care of the family than being there romantically for her. I think to her that was very painful. […] So, we are trying to talk over and now I think her family is the one putting a little pressure because they need bride price now to be paid fully. […] But it is a rough life for me. Because I miss my kids, I miss my wife. Most time now I must stay out long to forget about the stress.

In this case, 'staying out long' meant going to bars and having a drink. His indication that he needed to 'forget about the stress' can be seen as evidence of retreatism. Retreatism, in turn, can be seen as associated with the second form of anomie, in which there is a discrepancy between the socially desired goals and the available means to achieving them.

Domestic violence

To make matters worse, high levels of alcohol consumption were often accompanied by domestic abuse. Domestic abuse was a topic that I did not expect to talk about when I embarked on my fieldwork. Yet, many of the people I spoke with brought the topic up, and their experiences and pain very much touched my heart. Consequently, I came to believe that domestic violence is an important and interesting topic to look at both from the perspective of the individual and that of the household in the post-conflict context. Unfortunately, there are few studies on this specific topic, as most studies on gender-based violence tend to look at (sexual) violence against women as a strategy of war. The disruption of intimate partner relations in the aftermath of civil war and displacement does not receive sufficient attention, and even though the analysis in this chapter does not offer any final judgement, I do aim to contribute to our understanding of this.

The topic of domestic violence surfaced in all of the stories that were presented at the beginnings of both empirical chapters. These stories underline the importance of the topic and its detrimental effects, but also go to show that people's experiences are often complicated and multilayered. These people, however, were not the only victims of domestic violence in Pabo. Actually, many of the women I spoke with reported that they were victims of domestic abuse at some point in their life. As the individual stories already highlighted the problem and its consequences, I believe there is no need for more examples here. Yet, there are some things that I would still like to emphasize.

The first is indeed the relationship to substance abuse. Actually, high levels of alcohol consumption have been identified as a risk factor for domestic violence in many studies – both in northern Uganda and in other countries (Tumwesigye, Kyomuhendo, Greenfield, & Wanyenze, 2012). For the case of northern Uganda, it was found that there is a high prevalence of domestic abuse (Saile, Neuner, Ertl, & Catani, 2013) and that women whose partners got drunk often were six times more likely to report such violence (Tumwesigye et al., 2012). This is mirrored in my case study of Pabo, as all the women who told me that their (ex-)husband abused them, also told me that he would usually be drunk when he beat them. Alcohol is an important factor, but some women also mentioned the use of marijuana. Additionally, both Francis and Lawrence, who talked to me about how they used to abuse the women they were with, said that they were always drunk when they did

this. As Lawrence said: 'So it was a must for me. When I was drunk, I had to fight.'

It is also important to realize that domestic violence was considered normal by many. During my time in Pabo and Gulu, I heard men express that they believed they needed to beat their wives in order to ensure their obedience. Moreover, some women believed the violence was 'natural'; Mama Collins, for example, told me that 'of course' there was violence in her marriage. Similarly, I would sometimes ask women whether they were happy in their marriage and they would say that they were – only to bring up later that their husband would beat them on a regular basis. It seemed that the normalization of violence against women had roots in the past as well, as some women told me that they also experienced such violence before the time of displacement.

Despite the breezy responses that were given by some of the women I spoke with, I would like to emphasize the seriousness of the abuse in many cases. This became clear from Lucy's story and also those of Flora and Jennifer, who told me that they were beaten unconscious and at times felt that they might be beaten to death. Flora reported that her ex-husband sometimes used a spear and Jennifer reported that her boyfriend bludgeoned her with a machete. Jennifer's multiple scars go to show that these were what the locals called 'serious beatings.' Perhaps, on the broader scale, these were exceptionally grave instances, but it cannot be the case that anyone actually believed such beatings were something natural or appropriate.

As both women and men related violence by a husband directed at his wife to 'obedience', I came to believe that domestic violence was also part of a power struggle. As highlighted in the discussion on masculinity, men were supposed to be more important than women and were supposed to be 'in charge'. It can be hypothesized that, in some cases, domestic violence was a way for men to re-establish the control and superiority that they felt had slipped away due to their inability to meet societal expectations. Even though physical violence did not contribute directly to actually fulfilling societal expectations, it probably made the man feel (temporarily) superior again in this situation. Along these lines, domestic violence could be a way of establishing control over at least one thing, when other things were beyond someone's control, and, simultaneously, be an expression of powerlessness and frustration.

The consequences of domestic violence were grave. As seen in the personal stories, women could be severely injured and there was serious trauma and stress that came with the continual threat of violence at home – a space where

one is supposed to feel safe. As is often the case with domestic violence, talking about these serious cases and its consequences, however, was a taboo for many.

Going to the police was not usually an option either. The first resort when things became untenable would be parents and, subsequently, the elders or the Local Council leaders. These authority figures were supposed to help mediate and, in most cases, their aim was to ensure that the couple remained together. According to Jane, however, the involvement of the elders and clan leaders had become less since the time of the camp. As shown in her story in the previous chapter, she had expected the elders to intervene when her husband's violent behaviour escalated, but instead there was no response. Samuel echoed this belief, saying that 'before camp, elders would intervene in case of domestic violence,' but as of the time in the camp, when people also got more mixed up than in the villages, 'non-relatives will not advise because everyone is on their own thing; you think of protecting yourself and your family only.'

These observations are important because they connect domestic violence to the first type of anomie that was described in this chapter. The decay of traditional authority structures and increased individualism meant less social control, which, in turn, allowed for more leeway for domestic violence to occur. As everyone was increasingly focused on their own problems, they would check up on each other less regularly; some families might have slipped from attention. In a different way, it became apparent that there was a social system in place whereby the elders of a clan would guide the relationships between husbands and wives. They would advise them on how to solve disputes or, if the dispute was deemed irresolvable, they would allow a couple to get divorced. The weakening of traditional authority also meant that this social system became unbalanced. Overall, the presence of anomie can be conceptualized as a permissive factor for increased domestic violence to occur.

Divorce

That marriages were under stress during the time of the camp and in the period afterwards is reflected in the rate of divorce and separation in Pabo. Actually, more than a quarter of the people I spoke with had divorced at least one partner at some point in their life. Of these, three quarters were women. The reasons for separation that were cited by these women were almost exclusively alcohol- and domestic abuse.

Divorce was not something taken lightly in the Acholi context. Often, permission for divorce needed to be granted by either the elders or the Local Council leadership. Some of the women I spoke with did indeed take this route and were officially separated. Yet, couples would also separate unofficially, especially as not all marriages were 'complete' or people lived together and started a family without being married at all. The benefit of the latter was that it was easier for some people to get out of the relationship, but the downside was that there was no such thing as a division of assets or a regulation for custody of the children in the event of a split. As described in the previous chapter, divorce had an impact on women's access to land. Both the loosened practice of cohabitation and rules for divorce pointed to a change in customs in the Acholi context.

This did not mean, however, that it was always easy to separate. Grace, one of the sweetest women I met in Pabo, was still stuck in a bad marriage. She met her husband during the time of the camp, after she had divorced her first husband who she described as 'drunk, abusive, and mad.' She had two children from her first marriage and three from her current marriage. Yet, her current husband hardly ever came home and did not contribute anything to the care of the children. Whenever she tried to talk to him about it, he would beat her. According to her, he behaved this way because he had three other wives in the village, one more in Pabo, and one in Gulu town; she did not mean much to him. In tears, she told me that she already 'talked so much,' and would now just try to fix it herself. Leaving him, however, would be too harsh on her husband because the children were also his.

Sabina offered another example of staying in a bad marriage. She told me how her husband used to get drunk and beat her, which meant that 'the family was full of violence.' When I asked her why she stayed with him, she told me:

> I didn't even bother to divorce the man. Reason being I gave birth to seven children with that man. So if I divorce him, where will I take the children? So, I have to persevere and stay with him. Because no man will accept to take care of the children – 7 of them from another man! Yes. So, even if I feel like I have to move away, divorce, that reason of children still hold me at home.

In Sabina's case, the husband died after a while. According to her, he was poisoned by people from the village because he was such an annoying drunkard. Yet, her story points to a common concern among women who were in a marriage that was not working out the way they had hoped: it was widely believed that another man would not accept children from a previous

marriage, and that taking care of the children by yourself would mean that you were even worse off.

On the other hand, there were also counter-examples. One of these was the story of Lucy's family: James joined the family later and accepted the children Lucy already had from multiple previous marriages. They even seemed to have built a fairly strong bond. In a different vein, there were also some women who simply remained single, including Flora, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter. Gloria was another such lady. She was 'refreshing her mind' by staying single for a while. When I asked her how that felt, she laughed, and told me:

> I am feeling like I am free. Because when you are married, you are subjected to your husband. But I am not. So, I am free at this time. […] [It] is better to stay alone than to stay with someone who always fights you. That's why I am now feeling free and happy.

Even though, she admitted, it was easier to have a big harvest when she was still together with her husband, the violence and the minimal contribution were not worth it for her. I believe that the increased rate of divorce per se as well as the fact that some women chose to remain single, at least until a better man came along, pointed to the empowerment of women and increased agency on their side.

To complete the circle, I would like to return to Susan's statement that 'families were breaking' because of the war, displacement, and an inability to move back to the villages. I believe this statement perfectly captures the trends that have been described in the previous sections and allows for a link between anomie on the societal level and its effects on individuals and households. Especially the discrepancy between what people thought marriages and masculinity were supposed to be like and the available means to make this come true caused frictions in the relationships between husbands and wives. This combined with decreased moral guidance and social control and, in some cases, led to alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Whether or not this led to divorce, it definitely led to families breaking.

Other factors influencing behaviour

Importantly, it should be emphasized that anomie cannot account for or explain everything. Firstly, anomie is a meta-level theory that looks at changes in society and hypothesizes the effect of such changes on the micro-

level. This means that, simultaneously, other processes can affect behaviour and, in this case, can contribute to occurrences such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and divorce. In a different vein, it can also be imagined that some of the developments, including intergenerational differences and women's empowerment, might also have occurred as a result of urbanization and modernization, which probably would have reached Pabo regardless of war and displacement. A final important point is that I do not aim to romanticize the past; some interviewees told me that alcoholism and domestic abuse occurred before displacement as well. In this sense, it is hard to establish with certainty how the current situation compares to the situation before displacement. At the very least, however, it seems that the situation of anomie functioned as a catalyst that exaggerated already existing tensions. Still, anomie as a theory opens up new ways of looking at the long-term effects of displacement and of seeing how societal structures are affected by displacement and, in turn, affect individual lives.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss some of the possible alternative factors that may have contributed to the high levels of domestic violence and alcohol abuse and the resulting breaking of families. Keeping the presented individual stories in mind helps to see how multiple factors indeed come together, and how the method of collecting life histories is valuable in mapping the complicated processes of intimate partner- and family relations.

One of the ways to explain the prevalence of alcoholism and domestic abuse is through the psychological theory of 'social learning'. Of course, this theory is multifaceted and several strains have been developed, but for the current purpose, it is enough to use a simplified definition. According to the social learning theory, children will observe behaviour around them, as exhibited by role models (family members, friends, teachers, the media, etc.) and, if they see their role model being rewarded for this behaviour in some way, they will imitate this behaviour later on (see Grusec (1992) for an elaboration on the theory). This somewhat fits with the theory of anomie as it is also about conforming to one's surroundings, but by focusing on the role of role models, it is more about individual behaviour than societal guidance.

Albert Bandura was one of the founders of the social learning theory, and he also believed social learning could explain aggressive behaviour. Bandura is most famous for his Bobo Doll Experiment. Through this experiment, Bandura showed that when children watched an adolescent model act aggressively towards an inflatable doll, they would later exhibit similar behaviour towards

this doll.[100] Bandura believed that this controlled experiment was also a model for sociological settings, but some have questioned this assumption (Touhey, 1975). In a study more specific to domestic violence, Mihalic and Elliott (1997) found that exposure to violence during childhood and adolescence was associated with higher rates of marital violence as an adult. They found that this held true for men as well as women and for perpetration as well as victimization for both sexes.

It could indeed be the case that exposure to previous violence made some men in Pabo behave violently. Similarly, this probably contributed to the perception of some of the people I spoke with that domestic violence was normal. Women might have seen other important women in their lives being victimized and internalized this. Jennifer's continuous return to violent situations, for example, might have been the result of witnessing such violence from an early age. Similarly, Francis had also seen his father beat his mother on multiple occasions.

Additionally, children 'getting a beating' was reported as highly common both at school and at home. It was a common and often accepted way of disciplining children. Some would say to me: 'An African's ears are on the buttocks' to justify this method and to thwart any 'Western criticism.' Yet, the case can be made that the exposure to violence both at school and at home might have contributed to the normalization of violence and to people exhibiting aggressive behaviour later in life as well.

In a post-conflict context, there is an additional layer of violence that people have come into contact with. As emphasized earlier in this book, every single person I spoke with during my time in northern Uganda had experienced some form of violence. Either aimed directly at them by the LRA or the UPDF or directed at loved ones. Taking this to the extreme, there were those who had been abducted. Whether for a long or a short period of time, they had seen things that could not be unseen. As Lawrence told me: 'In the bush, three weeks is equal to three years.' The idea that exposure to such violence contributed to higher levels of domestic abuse was also found by Saile et al. (2013) in a study of couples in northern Uganda.

Francis's story, for example, showed that he was coping with trauma due to his abduction by engaging in drinking, but that he was also struggling

100 Images from the experiment and explanation by Bandura can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmBqwWlJg8U.

with existential uncertainty and an inability to fulfil his role as the head of a household. In his case, many different factors came together. As such, all of the forms of violence discussed above played into the inception of cycles of violence, in which people who witnessed violence or who had become victims continued to find themselves in abusive relationships. Francis, Jennifer, and Flora were living testimonies to this.

Resulting from the same events, but following a different mechanism, trauma also comes into play in post-conflict settings. Witnessing violence against loved ones or being abducted (as a child) and witnessing or perpetrating violence was a traumatic experience for many of the people I spoke with. Francis, for example, reported that he was experiencing fear due to his abduction, and that drinking alcohol was helping him to find relief from this fear. The experience of displacement must also have been traumatic for some. This was especially the case because it brought on existential uncertainty; not knowing where your next meal is coming from and whether you will be able to take care of your children meant that people lived in constant uncertainty, fear, and stress.

Aside from existential uncertainty, simple idleness and boredom also contributed to higher levels of alcohol consumption in the camp. The alcohol consumption, in turn, led to higher levels of domestic abuse. Overall, it can thus be seen that many factors came together in Pabo during the time of the camp and in the post-encampment period. This mix proved toxic for some of the men and women I spoke with during my time there. The discussion in this chapter also goes to show how deeply rooted violence is in this case, and how much violence people were exposed to throughout the course of their lives.

The LRA experience

Before reaching the conclusion of this chapter, I would like to briefly highlight the situation of people who were abducted by the LRA. I learned most about this from two amazing women: Flora and Gloria. Flora's story has already been presented, but Gloria only featured briefly in this chapter. Two women is obviously a very small sample, but I believe their stories are important to counter the all-too-common narrative of women as passive victims.

For both men and women, it seems that all the factors discussed in this chapter came together in the cases of people who were formerly abducted. In such a combination, they were amplified. The first was the break with

Acholi culture. Flora, who was abducted at a young age like most of the LRA abductees, expressed that, during her time in the bush, she was wondering what it was like to return to civilian life. She had learned so much from the LRA leadership, but she realized that this was not how people used to behave back home. Spending a large part of your childhood and adolescence with the LRA meant that much cultural education and socialization was missed out on. Additionally, upon return many people faced social exclusion, meaning that it was very hard to familiarize oneself with the societal norms and values.

Former LRA abductees also faced additional problems in terms of providing economically. Many of them had missed out on education and thus were disadvantaged. Additionally, trauma could sometimes get in the way of functioning properly. Francis's story reveals that he had to deal with anxiety and that this was one of the factors that contributed to his drinking. His drinking, in turn, had an effect on his ability to provide and on his relationship with his wife and children. It thus contributed to his difficulties with fulfilling the masculine role he was expected to.

When it comes to gender role expectations, it is also important to note that women who had been abducted for a long time probably least fit the stereotype of an Acholi woman. These women grew up in an environment where they had to be tough, physically strong, and often ruthless; there was no place in the bush for quiet and submissive women. Not fitting that stereotype meant that these women faced additional problems upon return. Flora and Gloria both reported that people would tell them they were 'rude', and Ojok Anthony also said that his second wife Evelyn, who was also a returnee, was sometimes 'rude' and 'very tough', and that 'people fear[ed] her'. It was probably the case that these women expressed themselves less humbly than was expected of them.

This also had an effect on their relationships. According to Gloria, the main difference between her and her friends who had never been abducted was with problems in marriage. As she put it:

> Especially like for our case, it is very difficult to get a man and to stay with him as a husband. […] Because even the parents of the boy, even the neighbors... whenever you try to fall in love with a certain man, they will tell him: 'Don't do that. This one is from the bush. Sometime she can be crazy and do something at home.' […] But this ones who were there at home, they were never abducted, they have at least husbands to stay with. […] [T]hat was the main point; others we at least suffered together. But when it comes to that

point of relationship, it is very hard to the formerly abducted women to have a peaceful home with the husband.

What emerges here is, firstly, that it was hard for women who had returned from the bush to find a husband. For some, this was amplified because they returned with children – children who, as we saw in Flora's story, were often not accepted by a new man. Additionally, it can be seen that it was apparently harder for female returnees to have a 'peaceful home', a marriage without violence. It seemed that the 'rude' behaviour and the fact that these women were 'used to violence' gave some men the idea that it was justified to mistreat them. Additionally, many of these women were already in a more vulnerable position because they faced stigmatization by the community and had a weaker social network. As such, abuse could more easily take place. Finally, if the findings of Mihalic and Elliott (1997) do indeed apply here, these women had become part of a cycle of violence in which they were victimized over and over again. None of this is to say that women who were not abducted were never in abusive relationships; the material presented in this chapter proves otherwise. Yet, it does go to show an increased vulnerability of formerly abducted women when it comes to domestic violence and acceptance of them and their children.

There was, however, also an important flipside to these women not fitting the stereotype of an Acholi woman: they were very independent. Flora and Gloria were the only women I heard expressing that they did not need a husband to survive – even though times were hard. And Evelyn wanted to buy a piece of land without the help of her husband because she wanted 'an independent life'. Even though these women had experienced so much, they kept pushing forward and continued to struggle to improve their own lives as well as that of their children. I believe that it is important to recognize the additional hardships of returnees of both genders, but also to celebrate their victories and to see that change can sometimes be for the better.

Conclusion

This second empirical chapter continued where Chapter 5 left off. Towards the end of Chapter 5, I discussed the disruptive nature of displacement by looking at what it means to be home – thereby laying the foundation for a further look into the effects of displacement on social relationships. In the current chapter, I took the homestead as a starting point, and looked at the relationship between generations and between husbands and wives.

Throughout the chapter, I have pointed out that the legacy of displacement indeed contains a variety of frictions in these relationships.

I proposed using a dual theory of anomie as a theoretical lens through which to analyse the long-term effects of displacement. This theory, first presented by Durkheim, refers to a lack of social guidance and a discrepancy between socially desired goals and the means available to achieve them, both due to an external shock to society. The previous chapter had already highlighted that traditional authority structures, such as clans, chiefs, and spirits, had lost significance due to the extended period of encampment for such a large share of the population. In the current chapter, I further elaborated on this and linked it to the first side of anomie: lack of social guidance.

It was shown that many people in Pabo observed an increased individualism, something that was argued to be less present during the time before the camp. Many older people also directly linked this to a lack of respect for Acholi culture, often seeing the younger generation as one with an indecent lifestyle and lacking direction. Many younger people, in turn, often expressed different dreams for their future than their forebears. Yet, whereas being a farmer was valued less by the younger generation, there were also similarities across the generations: land ownership and raising a family were considered important by both older and younger people. Putting this into perspective, it must be noted that even though many people did look at the time in the camp as a causal factor for the intergenerational friction, it is likely that a degree of modernization and urbanization would have affected the lives of people in Pabo and its surrounding villages even if war and displacement had not happened. In this sense, it remains important to acknowledge that societies and cultures are dynamic and everchanging in nature, and that such changes can at times cause tensions.

After looking at the relationship between generations, I turned to the relationship between men and women. Even though men and women have both been through war and displacement, it was found that their experiences were qualitatively different. Here, it was argued, society plays a large role in dictating the expectations for the behaviour and achievements of men and women. Yet, as was seen in the personal stories as well, the envisioned ideals did not always crystalize in reality. Here we observe the second side of anomie as an important legacy of displacement: a discrepancy between socially desired goals and the means available to achieve them.

Primarily, this discrepancy was visible with men and the ideas surrounding masculinity. Traditionally, men were expected to take on a leading role in the household and society, and to be the provider of their family. Yet, due to the war and displacement, many of the means to do so had disappeared. Now, great expectations increasingly became a great burden. It was found that the distress caused by this could, in some cases, lead to alcohol abuse and/or domestic violence. Alcohol abuse and domestic violence victimized women in multiple ways and was often of detrimental effect on people's marriages. What was observed was the breaking of such relationships as well as a shift in the division of tasks, whereby women fulfilled multiple roles and provided for their families in different ways.

Reflecting on this, I believe that even though most of the writing about anomie is negative – indeed, most of the consequences of it mentioned in this chapter were very negative – not everything about the phenomenon needs to be considered negative. A societal change can also be good or neutral. The fact that there is no clear guidance from society now might lead to new ideas about what constitutes socially accepted norms and goals, and this can be a way forward. Even though every social setting has its stereotypes, I also saw many examples of the opposite. There were women who were the main or sole provider, and who did not fit the stereotype of women as passive and obedient. There were men who did not retreat into alcoholism or domestic abuse, who cared immensely for their wife and their children, and valued showing love and teaching children right from wrong. There were men and women who were a mixture of all these qualities. Overall, the lived experiences of the men and women introduced in this book, both young and old, show that there are indeed alternatives. Here, moving forward in a constructive manner requires acknowledging that the effects of war and displacement have not worn off and that an active dialogue is needed that crosses generational- and gender boundaries.

To wrap this all up, I would like to connect these findings to some of the concepts introduced in the third chapter. Here, I argued that forced displacement constitutes a form of structural violence. The current chapter has, in essence, shown that this type of violence has had an effect far beyond the time of displacement. In a way, the underlying social fabric of society has been hit so badly that tensions arose at the level of families and clans. In unison with the previous empirical chapter, it can be concluded that positive peace has not been achieved to its full extent, as many people are unable to fulfil their need for well-being, meaning, and freedom. In sum, this demonstrates the long-term effects of displacement on social life.

Photo 11
On the road

7 Conclusion: From politics to people

Tar lak miyo wanyero
- 'Sadness and sorrow should now weigh us down'
(P'Bitek, 1985)[101]

'Thank you for visiting me at my home. Anytime when you are passing, ah, you can find me here. And when you go back to your home, do not forget about us,' Lawrence said as we were saying our goodbyes. A little over six months had passed since we first met, and a lot had happened. I learned about the current living situations of people who had experienced displacement and were still coping with its effects. I got to meet a range of incredible human beings with life experiences so different from mine, who experienced hardship but nevertheless continued to keep fighting and did not forget to keep smiling. I shared some of these memories in this book, and they will remain with me forever. As such I could promise Lawrence wholeheartedly: 'I will not forget.'

In the chapter that concludes this long journey, I will make a final effort to bring it all together. I will take the time to reflect on the research questions that guided the journey, their answers, and the ways forward. I will do this by firstly summarizing the arguments made and the answers given to the research questions in the previous chapters. Then, I will proceed to a discussion of these results, examining them in light of existing literature. I will also highlight areas that have remained unaddressed in the current research and suggest topics that might be of interest for future research. From this largely theoretical endeavour, I will move on to briefly discuss the policy implications of the current findings. Writing policy advice is not the main objective of this book, but it is important to review the practical implications. Finally, I will conclude this book by emphasizing how structures and stereotypes affect individuals and how, hopefully, I have put a human face on the topic of displacement.

101 Acholi proverb. The literal translation, as provided by P'Bitek (1985), is: 'It is to show the whiteness of our teeth that we laugh,' but P'Bitek also provided the loose translation as presented above.

A summary of the findings

I started this book by introducing the history of the region of northern Uganda and with a discussion of the formation of an Acholi ethnic identity. It was against the background of higher-order political developments that this identity started to crystalize and to be articulated by its members. I continued with a short discussion of the regional and ethnic divides that emerged and were solidified during colonial times. Subsequently, I arrived at the civil war that brought about the displacement of the overwhelming majority of the Acholi people. The town of Pabo was introduced as the location of one of these camps and the site of the current research.

In the subsequent chapter, I introduced some of the crucial concepts and policies relating to displacement. I investigated how displacement fits in the tradition of conflict resolution and what place it has taken (and failed to take) in peacebuilding. It was here that I introduced the crucial concepts of structural violence and positive- and negative peace, as developed by Johan Galtung (1969; 1990). I held that the forced encampment of the Acholi constituted a form of structural violence because needs were not fulfilled and all aspects of life were controlled by external agencies – a condition upheld by both humanitarian agencies and the warring parties. Considering the nature of this violence, I argued that policies regarding displacement that see the physical move away from the displacement camp as a crucial indicator of success are insufficient; in order to achieve positive peace – in the sense of the absence of structural violence and the presence of social justice – a more multidimensional approach that takes the long-term effects of displacement into account seems appropriate.

Building on this, I looked at the broader discourse that surrounds displacement. I argued that, within the framework of humanitarian aid, academia, the media, and NGOs create a debilitating discourse of a universal, helpless victim without voice or agency. Additionally, studies by humanitarian organizations as well as by academics (mainly from the disciplines of political science and development studies) tend to take a quantitative approach and, as such, contribute to the idea of a universal 'IDP experience.' What is often not sufficiently acknowledged and definitely not sufficiently backed up with the necessary resources is that war leaves deeper scars. It is against this backdrop that I argued for increased contextualization of the multivariate experiences of displaced persons as well as the need to hear the voices of displaced persons themselves.

This conclusion led me to argue that lived experiences of displaced people should take centre stage in order to promote an understanding of what it means to be displaced and what the long-term effects of displacement are. I proposed two broad lines of inquiry that would help in the analysis of lived experience: time and space. In relation to time, I argued that increased historicization, with attention to large-scale historical processes as well as individual history, is crucial to counter universalist narratives. By dividing space into geographical place and social space, I ventured into a critical discussion of how people can form different attachments to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them. Within the discussion of social space and attachments to geographical place, I paid specific attention to the concept of 'home' and what it might mean for someone to 'be home' or to feel like she belongs. It was in this context, that I warned that the idea of refugees 're'-turning home might be simplistic and idealistic, since people as well as places change over time.

Subsequently, I moved on to the chapter on methodology and methods. Here, I argued for interdisciplinarity as a way to counter the type of universalist discourse I had criticized before. I described how my personal interest and training in political science inspired the choice for the topic of the research, but that the methodology of critical ethnography was more appropriate. The reasons why critical ethnography was deemed more appropriate are that it acknowledges that social life is in flux, that it encourages the researcher to capture multiple images of a person or social group, and that there is an appreciation of story-telling. Additionally, it encourages the researcher to reflect on her own influence on the research.

Having described the methodological outlook, I moved on to outline the methods used in the current research. I presented the method of collecting life histories through unstructured interviews and argued that this is useful because it allows for an exploration of the interaction between structure and agency and has the ability to bring 'silenced lives' to the forefront. I held that, if properly contextualized, life histories can provide an insight into broader dynamics in communities. In line with the methodology of critical ethnography, I subsequently explored the many ways in which the narratives collected through the life history method might be influenced by external factors, internal processes of the narrator, translation, and myself.

Chapter 5, then, constituted the first of two empirical chapters. It was in this chapter that I set out to give answers to the first main research question: Why did some people who moved to Pabo camp during the war never leave?

I presented the first elaborate life histories and introduced many excerpts from others throughout the text in order to show that parallels can be drawn between the experiences, but that there were also many idiosyncrasies. The personal stories also pointed to the fine line between choosing a path in life and being forced into one, thus showing the fragility of agency under structural constraints.

In this light, I found that there were several considerations for people to remain in Pabo. One of these was that there were new business opportunities. Some people had branched out into small business ownership and found that Pabo had a larger potential market than the villages they came from. These business opportunities were especially useful for those who were unable to work in agriculture because of old age or disability as well as young people who did not aspire to work on the land. The tarmacked road that passed through Pabo meant that it was easy for people to do business with or travel to larger cities such as Gulu, Nimule, or Kampala. Moreover, access to the school in Pabo as well as its health centre and relatively large market were important reasons for people to not leave Pabo, even though most struggled to pay the school fees. Aside from these facilities, some people cited the presence of a social network in Pabo as a reason to stay. For some, the friends they had in Pabo were very important, or they had family and familial duties to fulfil there. Finally, people who had fought in the LRA considered Pabo to be a place where it was easier to remain anonymous and where people were more accepting of former LRA members.

The most important reason to want to leave Pabo, however, was a desire to return to one's ancestral land – the land owned by a person's clan. I paid much attention to this topic in the chapter because it is so multifaceted and omnipresent in the lives of many people in Pabo. Importantly, ancestral land is traditionally not for sale, and rights of use and access to the land are inherited by male heads of households belonging to the clan. The main way of gaining access to land for women, on the other hand, was to marry into a clan. The rules of customary tenure that surround the access and use of land point to the way in which this economic means for providing is highly intertwined with social relationships.

What I found, however, was that what followed the war and the massive displacement, was a narrowing of the interpretation of customary tenure as well as a commodification of land. The death of family members meant that those who were supposed to know the boundaries of the lands that had been allotted to various households within the clans were no longer there. This led

not only to confusion, but also to people taking this opportunity to grab more land. In a turn for the worst, some people found themselves in a situation where their family ties were no longer acknowledged by other family- or clan members for the sake of denying them access to the land. Much along the same lines, women were often unable to access land when their husbands had died because people would deny that they were ever 'fully married' to this man – meaning in this case that a bride price had not been paid in full and the woman had not given birth to male children. Overall, the population in northern Uganda had significantly grown and become poorer due to war and displacement. This combination meant that land became a contentious resource.

Generally, the loss was so significant because people who did not have access to land not only lost a means of providing for their family, but also a place of belonging. I explored the latter in this chapter by looking at how specific lands held specific meaning in the Acholi context. By taking a closer look at cosmological beliefs surrounding ancestor veneration, I concluded that the ancestral land often took the shape of a 'ceremonial landscape.' Here, shrines were constructed where ancestral spirits were appeased. As a specific physical space, ancestral shrines have been proposed as the geographical places where bridges are built between the physical and moral world, where the past, present, and future meet, and where (ancestral) belonging is marked. Overall, this made that exclusion from one's ancestral land meant exclusion from clan relationships and connections with the ceremonial landscape.

Reflecting all of this back to the policy-framework that I discussed in Chapter 3, I concluded that my observations gave rise to some serious concerns. Firstly, they showed that many of the challenges these people were facing were highly context-dependent; customary land tenure rules and cosmological beliefs differ across the world and thus negate a universal 'IDP experience.' Secondly, the interaction between structural constraints and agency showed that people may not always deliberately choose a certain path in life. This is relevant because, in the international framework, it is often maintained that displacement ends when someone makes an informed and voluntary decision to either leave a place or integrate locally. By transcending the purely geographical connotations of displacement, this chapter showed that other avenues should be opened up to explore what it means to be displaced and when displacement can be considered over.

In Chapter 6, the second empirical chapter, I continued to focus on the long-term effects of displacement on social relationships. I zoomed in on dynamics

between different members of the household. I argued that the concept of 'anomie' is useful in analysing the effect displacement has had on the lives of people in Pabo. I defined anomie as a two-sided result of an external shock to society, consisting of, on the one hand, reduced social guidance on desirable goals and accepted behaviour and, on the other hand, a discrepancy between goals that are still valued and the means available to achieve them.

After showing that it was indeed displacement that constituted an external shock to much of Acholi society, I continued by exploring the first aspect of anomie: reduced social guidance. Here, I found that many interviewees experienced confusion and disorganization in the wake of displacement. They pointed to increased individualism and decreased importance of the clan and other traditional structures as indicators of change. All this led some people, and especially elderly people, to conclude that there was a loss of tradition and morality. It was found that intergenerational friction could sometimes arise because people from different generations had different values and aspirations. What was found to have remained stable across the generations, however, was the value attached to owning land and raising a family.

The second part of the chapter was concerned with the second aspect of anomie: a discrepancy between socially accepted goals and the available means. In this chapter, I looked specifically at gender roles and masculinity. I found that within marriage there was a clear ideal division of labour: the man should provide economically for the family while the woman should take care of the home and the children. Additionally, I found that there was a distinct hierarchy between men and women, both inside the home and in the broader society, whereby a man was considered to be more valuable and capable. This meant that men were higher up in the social hierarchy than women, but, simultaneously, it also implied great expectations. It was exactly with these great expectations that I pinpointed one of the problems. In the wake of displacement, men found it increasingly hard – if not impossible – to fulfil all expectations associated with masculinity, such as providing economically and paying a full bride price. The result was that women would take on additional tasks outside the home, but still not receive help within the home. Men, on the other hand, would be emotionally distressed, as they felt that they were failing their wives, children, and social expectations.

Ultimately, this put a strain on the relationships within marriage, and could often lead to the breaking of families. There were two factors that mainly contributed to the breaking of families and that could be partly traced to the effects of anomie. The first factor was termed 'retreatism'. Retreatism occurs

when people withdraw from society because they feel that they have no way of achieving the socially proscribed goals. I argued that, in this context, this mainly took the shape of alcoholism. With alcoholism often came domestic abuse. Domestic abuse was thus, through alcoholism, linked to the second form of anomie. At the same time, I argued, anomie can be seen as a permissive factor for domestic abuse, whereby reduced social control (by elders, the clan, or ancestral spirits) meant that there was more room for this behaviour. Finally, this brought me to the topic of divorce. I observed that a fair share of the people I spoke with had divorced at least one partner, and that the reason for divorce was almost exclusively alcohol- and domestic abuse. I emphasized that divorce was not a matter that should be taken lightly in the Acholi context, and that some women still found it hard to get a divorce. At the same time, however, I also argued that the increased rate of divorce *per se* as well as the fact that some women chose to remain single pointed to the empowerment of women and increased agency on their side.

In general, however, I emphasized that anomie is a meta-level theory that looks at changes in society and hypothesizes the effect of such changes on individuals and relationships. As such, there are many other potential factors that can influence behaviour. I pointed to the normalization of violence in daily life, the theory of social learning, and the role of trauma as such alternative explanatory factors. Yet, in the end, I believe anomie offered a useful lens through which to look at societal change, and that it offered the theoretical tools to also apply this to intergenerational- and gender relationships.

Overall, these two empirical chapters showed that the war and specifically the accompanying displacement put almost all aspects of life under pressure. It became clear that the experience of displacement penetrates deeply into a society's social fabric and remains there long after the official end of the war – as such impeding positive peace. In the context of Pabo, traditional authority was weakened, meaning that customary land tenure as well as cosmology and morality were under pressure. Social connections as well as sources of wealth had been wiped out because of the war, causing not only poverty but also pressure on masculinity and gender relations. Not in the least due to emerging land disputes, places one could 're'-turn to were no longer the places people had left before the war. And, the people who wanted to return were no longer the same as before they left the villages. Home could sometimes no longer be home, and, reversely, new homes could be made. Many people were clearly still struggling with these changes, and could at times feel at a loss.

The findings in light of existing literature and avenues for future research

At this point, I would like to place the findings summarized in these pages in light of existing literature and pose some critical questions. I would like to start with the issue that was central in the first empirical chapter: the non-return of displaced individuals. Most work investigating this topic is presented by organizations rather than in academic journals. Even though evidence from different case studies is presented in these works, the findings largely echo the findings that were presented in the first part of Chapter 5. Fagen (2011), publishing for the United States Institute of Peace [USIP], for example, discussed why refugees and IDPs 'do not go home' after conflict. She looked at the cases of Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Burundi,[102] and argued that, in these cases, insecurity, lack of economic opportunities, and poor services available in recent areas of conflict were the main obstacles to return. These categories were echoed by the US Government Accountability Office (2010) in a study regarding the non-return of Iraqi IDPs and refugees and by Vorrath (2008) regarding Burundian refugees. In yet a different case study, Ó Tuathail and O'Loughlin (2009) found economic concerns and lack of access to facilities as obstacles to return, but also cited 'local receptivity to returns' as a consideration for Bosnian IDPs and refugees. This study is, among these, the only one that considers social factors as equally important.

A final important concern mentioned in all these studies was that of property recovery. In a book edited by Scott Leckie (2009) that contains various case studies from across the globe on this topic, Leckie concluded that housing-, land-, and property rights challenges occur in many different post-conflict contexts, and that no single UN peace operation so far had comprehensively addressed these issues. As the aforementioned book contains yet other case studies (Cambodia, Kosovo, East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Afghanistan, Rwanda, the DRC, and Sudan), it is clear that this is an important topic and that the challenge of accessing land is not unique to Uganda.

Yet, accessing land in the northern Ugandan context does have specific dynamics. This was of concern to Whyte, Babiiha, Mukyala, and Meinert (2012), whose work was also discussed in Chapter 5. Their research was

102 Unfortunately, the methodology of Fagen's (2011) paper is not clearly indicated. I assume it is a literature review, mostly based on documents published by organizations rather than articles published in (peer-reviewed) academic journals (sources come from i.a. UNHCR, International Crisis Group [ICG], International Organization for Migration [IOM], the Brookings Institution, and the IDMC).

somewhat similar to the current research in its setup, as they did qualitative research among people who remained in Awach former IDP camp in northern Uganda between 2010 and 2011. Through a thorough analysis of the social component of land ownership in the Acholi context, they showed that many people, and especially women, faced exclusion from land because of a lack of social ties. In a recent quantitative study, this gender-bias was confirmed, as it was found that female-headed households had 'less favorable outcomes' particularly for land area, value, and experience of land disputes in northern Uganda (Adelman & Peterman, 2014, p. 591).

Through their qualitative approach, Whyte and colleagues (2012) concluded that the rejection of people from their claimed ancestral land was a form of 'patrilineal fundamentalism' (p. 294) and constituted a new, narrow interpretation of 'Acholi culture'. Their analysis greatly helped with the interpretation of some of the life histories collected during this research. The life histories presented here, in turn, offer elaborate illustrations of the practical implications and intricacies of being unable to access land. What Whyte and colleagues concluded is that many people they spoke to might have exercised their right to remain at the site of displacement, but that they did not find a sustainable solution because it was not voluntary and the conditions were not adequate for local integration.

In relation to local integration – as the flipside of non-return – there is, unfortunately, little material to work with. Even though local integration is one of the 'sustainable solutions' for internally displaced people that is mentioned by the UN, it has received little practical support and scholarly attention (Black & Gent, 2006; Ferris & Walicki, 2011; Whyte et al., 2012) and there is no data on progress towards this topic (Ferris & Halff, 2011). Ferris (2011) attempted to counter this through several case studies. Through these case studies, she concluded that some people did want to integrate locally but that others preferred to leave again. The main obstacles to local integration, according to Ferris, were inadequate housing and lack of income generating opportunities. She proposed local integration as an appropriate intermediate solution before eventual return, and argued that a sustainable solution must, by definition, be voluntary.

In this book, I do not explicitly focus on whether or not people had integrated locally. Yet, from the life histories it can be induced that some might have integrated to a higher degree than others when it comes to economic and social life. It would have been interesting, however, if this research had also included experiences from people who did move out of Pabo to return to

the village, in order to compare their experiences with those of people who remained in Pabo. Such a comparison would give more insight into the lived realities of different 'sustainable solutions'.

Overall, however, it can be seen that the dimensions of economics, facilities, and access to land and housing, as discussed in the current book, broadly resonate with findings from other authors. The point where it differs from many, however, is that there is a greater focus on the interplay between these dimensions. Additionally, there is a heavy focus in the current research on the social aspects of displacement – something which did not come back in many other writings. It makes clear the importance of the presence of loved ones as a positive incentive for remaining at the site of displacement and it also emphasizes the social and spiritual dimensions of geographical place. By proposing that ancestral land can be seen as a ceremonial landscape that demarcates a claim of belonging and identity, I went beyond simplistic notions of geographical place and questioned *why* people want to return. The topic of ancestral land and its place in cosmological systems in northern present-day Uganda is a topic that could benefit from more theoretical and empirical exploration.

Another crucial difference with most studies on displacement and non-return is that the current research took place more than a decade after the official end of the country's civil war. Because of this, insecurity due to fighting forces was not a concern. Additionally, the current research firmly puts the topic of displacement within the context of long-term peacebuilding; long-term non-return is under-researched, yet an important topic in light of peacebuilding and positive peace.

It was also in light of these far-reaching implications of displacement that I discussed the effects on the household and on gender relations. As emphasized in Chapter 6, there is a lack of studies into the disruption of intimate partner relations in the post-conflict context. The same can be said of the effect of war and displacement on a society's social fabric and on intergenerational relations.

Yet, there are a few studies that deserve mention here. Horn (2010), for example, aimed to explore why domestic violence was prevalent in Kakuma refugee camp, located in Kenya. She used the 'nested ecological theory of domestic violence' to argue that culture, socio-economic factors, family life, and individual aspects all contributed to domestic violence in the camp setting. She also emphasized shifting gender roles due to economic

hardship and an inability to pay bride price that left marriages 'unofficial' as important concerns in this regard. As she also indicated, however, her method of using focus group discussions to acquire data was 'less effective at identifying 'micro-structure' or family issues' (Horn, 2010, p. 368). In a way, the current method of using life histories, especially also collected among various members of the same family, might constitute a way of adding to this.

Another author who made a start in the discussion of gender roles after war is El-Bushra. El-Bushra (2003) was concerned with the effect of conflict (and displacement) on gender roles. According to her, gender roles do often change during conflict – especially in terms of giving more economic responsibilities to women – but this does not necessarily lead to the empowerment of women in terms of decision-making. This appears to be the case because the underpinning gender ideologies do not change but rather become further entrenched. As El-Bushra put it: 'Conflict may create some space to make a redefinition of social relations possible, but in so doing it seems to rearrange, adapt, or reinforce patriarchal ideologies rather than fundamentally alter them' (p. 261). What Whyte and colleagues (2012) referred to as 'patrilineal fundamentalism' and its effect on women's access to land could be seen as a variation on this theme.

Also in line with the current research, El-Bushra argued that there could be growing tensions between people's ideals of masculinity and femininity and reality when lives are restricted by violence, displacement, impoverishment, and personal loss. The same was argued by Lwambo (2013) regarding masculinities in the context of civil war in the DRC. In her study, respondents made a direct connection between a sense of failure that resulted from an inability to provide and domestic violence. Additionally, she argued that 'hegemonic masculinity' in this context created a general climate of violence and conflict, and that men should be empowered to make non-violent choices.

Overall, these few studies are very interesting and show that there are many new areas to explore in this respect. It remains interesting to see how perceptions of masculinity as well as femininity are affected by war and displacement and what kind of effect this can have on intimate partner relations. Especially, in this respect, placing gender relations and issues of masculinity and domestic violence in the post-conflict context is something that deserves more attention in scholarly literature. By pursuing this, a differentiation can be made between processes and phenomena that would have been present regardless of war and displacement and those that are

caused or intensified by it. It is only through such qualitative research that it can be investigated what the true impact of war and displacement in a particular context is.

Implications for policy

The current research has shown that displacement has much deeper and more complicated effects than is currently addressed in policy. Unfortunately, however, I do not hold the answer for a final policy approach that will resolve displacement and all its effects. Rather, I acknowledge that it is incredibly complicated to forge effective policies and that the context-sensitive approach that centralizes the experience of individuals, as proposed in this book, does not make this any easier; the sheer number of displaced individuals worldwide makes it seem downright impossible to tailor interventions.

Still, I would like to make an idealistic argument. I believe a complete switch in mindset is needed that allows for the large and long-term investment in human security, in the betterment of the lives of people who are experiencing displacement or other hardships. Thinking that this is, by definition, 'impossible' limits the possibility for change. In the current paradigm, investing a lot of money in development or the protection of vulnerable individuals is labeled as 'idealistic' or 'utopian', while putting broad policies in place and investing little money is seen as 'realistic'. By opposing these two, we get stuck in the idea that it is impossible to ever achieve a more equal and just world.

In short, it can be concluded that what is needed is more long-term attention to and investment (of monetary and human resources) in dealing with displacement. I would recommend that the effort to include displacement (and its effects) into peacebuilding is continued. This would be beneficial because peacebuilding is already accepted as a long-term effort, and the incorporation of efforts to deal with displacement into this framework will make that this would be recognized as a long-term effort as well. Ultimately, dealing with displacement and its long-lasting effects is a peacebuilding task.

It is also in this light that I argue for the continued strengthening of the position of IDPs in international and national law. Whereas refugees enjoy a fair share of protection, IDPs do not have comparable rights (IDMC, 2018d). Legal protection, and of course especially upholding this protection, can contribute to better living conditions and increased (political) agency on the side of internally displaced people. In this sense, I believe that internal

displacement overall deserves more attention in academic research as well as policy-making: even though, at this time, the number of IDPs is much higher than the number of refugees, the latter group still receives much more attention.

Finally, I believe that the gaze should shift to prevention – not only displacement, but of civil war and other conflict in general. This is again highly complex and an elaborate endeavor. As it has been shown that countries that have experienced conflict in the past are more likely to experience conflict again (Collier & Sambianis, 2002), I would suggest that investing in peacebuilding along the lines of positive peace is one of the more effective and comprehensive ways to prevent civil war and displacement in the future.

What becomes clear from this book is that, within the effort of peacebuilding and dealing with displacement, gender should always be considered. Fortunately, this has been on the rise for a few years now, and gender-sensitive approaches are increasingly mainstreamed. This is a positive development. Yet, I would also like to emphasize that whereas empowering women is important in its own right, it is also important to involve men in these changes. It has become clear throughout this work that, in the wake of war and displacement, masculinities can arise that are toxic for both men and women. As such, not only women should be empowered to make their own choices and live the life they want for themselves, but men should also be empowered to make nonviolent choices. Such mutual empowerment seems like the most sustainable way to improve gender equality and to bring down levels of gender-based violence.

Some concluding remarks: From structure to individuals

In this book, I have in many ways built bridges between larger structures and individuals. Firstly, it has become clear that structural violence has a large effect on individual lives. The forced encampment of many people has had consequences that stretch far beyond the time of displacement as many are still dealing with its consequences and oftentimes find themselves unable to live the life they would have wanted for themselves. Additionally, the forced encampment has damaged the social fabric that underlies society, and shifts on this meta-level were seen to have effects on the micro-level in the shape of intergenerational differences, individual stress and pressures, and

the breaking of families. In this sense, structural violence does indeed have personal effects.

Part of the structural violence in this regard is also the discourse that surrounds displacement. It is through this discourse that people are denied agency and a voice; they become mere numbers in a summation of human suffering. The policies and the humanitarian regime that result from this discourse reinforce this and keep pushing people from one theoretical box into another, all the while ignoring contextual and individual particularities. This discourse and these policies, however abstract they may start out as, have real consequences for those who live with the reality or legacy of displacement.

It is my hope that this book goes some way to providing alternatives to this universalist discourse that leaves displaced people without a voice. I believe that the current method of collecting life histories is a good way of both allowing the structural factors to surface and to stress individual agency in light of these structures. It is also my hope, then, that I was able to present some of the human faces that are behind the abbreviation of 'IDP', and to show that they still smile, even if, sometimes, it is just to show the whiteness of their teeth.

Photo 12
Sunset

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviews

NAME (pseudonym)	GENDER	DATE interview
1. Jackson	M	21/03/2017
2. David	M	21/03/2017
3. Opiyo Francis	M	23/03/2017
4. Atim Susan	F	23/03/2017
5. Beatrice	F	23/03/2017
6. Brenda	F	28/03/2017
7. Sabina	F	28/03/2017
8. Agnes	F	28/03/2017
9. Gloria	F	30/03/2017
10. Betty	F	30/03/2017
11. Alfred	M	30/03/2017
12. Faith	F	31/03/2017
13. Akena Mike	M	31/03/2017
14. Oloo Isaac	M	31/03/2017
15. Patience	F	06/04/2017
16. Okot Lawrence	M	06/04/2017
17. Denis	M	10/04/2017
18. Ben and Opiro	M, M	10/04/2017
19. Alice	F	10/04/2017
20. Patience	F	12/04/2017
21. Walter	M	12/04/2017
22. Florence	F	14/04/2017
23. Evelyn	F	14/04/2017
24. Aber Lucy	F	14/04/2017
25. Sabina (II)	F	20/04/2017
26. Opiyo Francis (II)	M	20/04/2017
27. Atim Susan (II)	F	20/04/2017
28. Okot Lawrence (II)	M	25/04/2017
29. Akena Mike (II)	M	25/04/2017
30. Oloo Isaac (II)	M	25/04/2017
31. Gloria (II)	F	28/04/2017

NAME (pseudonym)	GENDER	DATE interview
32. Alfred (II)	M	20/04/2017
33. Nancy	F	31/05/2017
34. Grace	F	31/05/2017
35. Emanuel	M	31/05/2017
36. Charity	F	12/06/2017
37. Mama Collins	F	12/06/2017
38. Jennifer	F	12/06/2017
39. Otim	M	14/06/2017
40. Chris	M	14/06/2017
41. Margaret	F	14/06/2017
42. Jane	F	16/06/2017
43. Genevieve	F	16/06/2017
44. Charles	M	16/06/2017
45. William	M	01/07/2017
46. Okec	M	01/07/2017
47. Ojok Anthony	M	01/07/2017
48. Flora	F	10/08/2017
49. Jane (II)	F	10/08/2017
50. Mama Collins (II)	F	17/08/2017
51. Opiyo Francis (III)	M	19/08/2017
52. Aber Lucy (II)	F	19/08/2017
53. Okello James	F	19/08/2017
54. Flora (II)	F	24/08/2017
55. Grace (II)	F	24/08/2017
56. Charles (II)	M	29/08/2017
57. Ojok Anthony (II)	M	29/08/2017
58. Akena Mike (III)	M	06/09/2017
59. Walter	M	06/09/2017
60. Charity	F	06/09/2017
61. Aber Lucy (III)	F	09/09/2017
62. Okello James (II)	M	09/09/2017
63. Owot Samuel (translator)	M	12/09/2017
64. Gloria (III)	F	12/09/2017
65. Jennifer (II)	F	10/09/2017

Appendix 2: **List of figures and creators***

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19	Map 2: Ethnographic map Uganda	Nel de Vink

Page	Photo number and name	Photographer
20	Portrait 1: Okot Lawrence	Stefan van der Heijden[103]
25	Photo 1: View of Pabo	Juul Kwaks
25	Photo 2: Roundhouses in Pabo	Juul Kwaks
25	Photo 3: Pabo's market	Puck Gerris
30	Photo 4: Woman walking with NRM shirt	Puck Gerris
56	Photo 5: Remnants of the camp	Juul Kwaks
82	Photo 6: Roundhouses in Pabo	Juul Kwaks
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103 Drawings of the interviewees were created by Stefan van der Heijden, based on pictures taken by Juul Kwaks.

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In this book, you will meet several individuals and families who experienced war and displacement during the civil war in northern Uganda (1986-2006). Based on ethnographic field research and specifically life histories, this book draws attention to their experiences and links this to broader analyses about 'post-conflict' society. It shows that displacement is more than a forced move from one geographical location to another, and that war and displacement disrupt social life in more ways than is often acknowledged in policymaking and discourse surrounding displacement.

African Studies Collection 79

Juul Kwaks is a PhD candidate at the Centre for International Conflict - Analysis & Management at Radboud University and a junior researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden. Her research focuses on the long-term effects of civil conflict and displacement, specifically in the Great Lakes region. Her main goal in research is to focus on the microlevel effects of conflict, thereby centring human beings and all their intricacies.

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