

Inverso, Catarina (2024)

From War To Peace As Conflict Goes On: Displacement And State Making During South Sudan's 2013-2020 Conflict.

PhD thesis. SOAS University of London.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00041459>

<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/41459>

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FROM WAR TO PEACE AS CONFLICT GOES ON: DISPLACEMENT AND
STATE MAKING DURING SOUTH SUDAN'S 2013-2020 CONFLICT

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD IN
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2023

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is the result of a qualitative and multi-site research carried out between August 2019 and February 2020, that addresses the 2013-2020 South Sudanese civil war and the displacement which caused a quarter of South Sudan's population to flee their homes. I aim to examine how the displacement comes to affect and is affected by State¹-making processes. With a focus on the experiences of a sub-set of South Sudanese displaced to Uganda, whose lives intertwine with that of their hosts, border officials and transnational histories of cross border movements, the research points toward an engagement with a 'multi-site living' strategy among displaced South Sudanese, who set up more permanent structures in the Ugandan side of the border. The dissertation contributes to a poorly explored strand of literature within the domain of State-making, about the paradoxes created between displacement and State-making processes, by showing how displaced South Sudanese in the margins engage with and lay claims to the State.

It also contributes to the literature on violence as a transformative force, which has meaning and is formative to people's perceptions of self-identify and their place within society. It does this by drawing on how 'mobility makes the State' of South Sudan through processes such as population engineering – a dangerous policy disguised in the 2015 and 2017 presidential orders to increased internal boundaries, assigning power to 'ethnic majorities', and during the civil war. Thus, the dissertation also explores how forms of violence interact with problematic ethnic identity-making, to impose a system of movement control. A final strand of this dissertation engages with the correlation between the effects of displacement and of cross border trade, seen to contribute to the changes in the way displaced households move towards a market economy. Ultimately, this thesis is a call to better integrate the study of displacement to the literature of modern State-making processes.

¹The capitalisation is intentional and used throughout the dissertation to firmly denote the State- as the centralised form of political power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a result of a challenging and unforgettable experience, no more because of the vast geographical terrain available for the conduct of fieldwork and the ever-increasing literature on and about South Sudan, than it has been to navigate through the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During much of 2020 I had found myself at a loss, when returning to fieldwork to resume three months of research was permanently paused, and a new strategy was necessary to complete this research project on South Sudan. Writing this dissertation about my six months of research in northern Uganda cannot be detached from the fact that it is also shaped by many hidden obstacles that followed since 2020, which meant this dissertation did not run its original course. I have much to thank my supervisor Zoe Marriage for allowing me to make the necessary changes, and for patiently empathising with my personal circumstances. My journey at SOAS began in 2010, when equipped only with three years of working experience in Southern Africa, I was accepted for a BA in African Studies, later converted into a joint degree with Development studies. I can positively say that the late Dr. Elizabeth Colson first inspired me to move further in the academic ladder, and I feel privileged to have known you in person during my time in Zambia. From then on, I have been lucky to navigate both fieldwork as an aid worker and academia, rather continuously. Zoe Marriage encouraged me to write about South Sudan during my post-graduate degree, when I already expressively had an interest in the region, and first suggested I should pursue a PhD. I intuitively deferred my PhD entry in 2017, when offered a position to work in South Sudan. From the moment I landed in Juba in August 2017, it was as if the roadmap for this thesis began to open up in my mind more clearly. Seeing Peter Moszynski in the office in Juba was definitely the most unlikely thing I could imagine. ‘Emma’s War’ had been not only how I learned about SOAS back in 2005 when I read the book, but the reason I knew who he is when he introduced himself. From day one we shared too many coffees, stories both in South Sudan and the UK. Thank you for your friendship, the valuable contacts shared in the past few years, and your hospitality, including when I had to quarantine back in the UK in late 2020. I am sure we will continue to share many more stories about our past and future adventures. Returning to SOAS a third time in 2018 for my doctoral degree still felt surreal. I thank my old SOAS friend Eric who pulled out contacts and hosts in Uganda for my pre-field research. John Justin who welcomed me in Arua during that first visit and helped me settle in and later initiate contacts in town in August 2019. A SOAS travel grant helped towards the costs of traveling between the UK and Uganda. To help kickstart research on the ground, the Centre of Basic Research had been crucial, with

a dedicated staff who made sure the paperwork was done, as did the OPM desk in Arua and the numerous Ugandan officials in West Nile whom I owe much gratitude. To my friend Jennifer, whom I first met along Adumi road in Arua; the evenings I spent sitting near you by the roadside watching and talking to people were precious, and your husband's Indian cooking came to my rescue many times when I 'forgot to eat'. Arthur Orwor who kindly shared valuable field research experiences when we met in Gulu and also assisted when my computer crashed, and I lost most of my research photographs and work. It was a difficult time in the field! My South Sudanese friends Barnabas, Jaiksana and Mabe, who helped me learn how to navigate Arua and accompanied me through Rhino settlement, shared many insights and remain friends. I will never forget your generosity and look forward to seeing you all again. Mamuch Deng, who right from start when I arrived in Kampala had always been ready to help and eager to keep company when I had to come to Makarere or needed to decompress. My friends Dezi and Herman from Ecopolis Europa, who made my final month in Arua a very happy one, inviting me to stay over in your office/guest house. I had not realised by then how much I had been neglecting a good night's sleep. Your work experience and knowledge of the region paved the way for a fruitful exchange of ideas, and I am grateful for your extended invitation to have me tag along on a two-day consultation gig in Yumbe. Beyond these amazing people, my time in the field, and the following dissertation, would not have been possible without all of the South Sudanese who made time to talk to me and entrusted me to tell a little bit about what life in displacement has been and what memories they hold important. To everyone whose names I could not mention due to their status, this thesis is about South Sudanese more than it is about the State of South Sudan.

I thank Christopher Cramer and Jonathan Goodhand for their critical contribution during my first year in this PhD journey. Joel Quirk and Amanda Hammar, Cherry Leonardi, Kate Meagher and Edward Thomas, who took time to discuss my research interests and provided valuable feedback. I am also extremely grateful to Sarah Vancluysen who offered to read and comment on a chapter draft and has eagerly exchanged ideas about our research interests. I would also like to thank Jillian Luff from MapGraphix for designing the maps produced from my awful hand-written drafts. My PhD fellows and former SOAS colleagues who maintained discussions and contributed to keep me motivated even when I doubted myself, especially my "dada" Mimi. Beyond writing this dissertation, I had the opportunity to share parts of it at online conferences and research clusters. As a Teaching Assistant at SOAS, I have had a rewarding experience of engaging with staff and students in the department of development

Studies, of mentoring and learning from other students, and taking part of training. I have had an intense time teaching, coaching and researching all together in these past few years while remote work was necessary, and to many of us, a something new to learn and adapt to, which is an experience I will never forget. Lastly, I could never thank enough my mother Doris. Nothing would have been possible without your support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

On December 15, 2013, only two years in as the world's newest independent State, South Sudan succumbed to violence. In the headquarters of the South Sudanese army's Presidential Guard in Juba, President Salva Kiir accused recently dismissed Vice President Riek Machar of an attempted coup, which Machar denied and instead, accused President Kiir of having instigated violence in a move to eliminate the opposition.² Within days of heavy fighting, hundreds had died, tens of thousands were displaced, and Machar fled the country. In August 2015, the two sides signed the Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (AR-RCSS), and Machar returned to Juba on 26 April 2016 to take up the position of First Vice-President in the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU). The deal also gave both the government and rebels the right to establish bases around the country to canton their troops. To Machar's SPLA-In Opposition, these cantonment sites presented an opportunity to grow an army in Equatoria, and the rebels heavily recruited soldiers to fill allotted bases.

Though soon after Machar returned, the fragile deal broke down and intense fighting engulfed Juba from 7 to 11 July 2016, between forces loyal to President Kiir and those supporting Machar. The violence quickly spread out of Juba, as Machar and allies fled the capital *en route* to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, while government forces carried out military operations in pursuit of them. In Yei and Lainya, areas to the southwest of Juba, ethnic Dinka troops slaughtered Equatorian inhabitants in their attempt to subdue the rebels. At the same time, Equatorian militia killed Dinka civilians living in the region. Hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into Uganda and Congo, in what became the largest human exodus Africa has seen since Rwanda in 1994. By the end of 2016, with an estimated 50.000 people killed and about a quarter of the entire population displaced, the United Nations said ethnic cleansing was underway and warned of genocide.³

²Prunier, 2014. *South Sudan: It All Began So Well*, Le Monde Diplomatique (English edition), February 2014. Accessed February 5, 2022. <http://mondediplo.com/2014/02/03southsudan> ; Human Rights Watch, 2014. *South Sudan: Ethnic Targeting, Widespread Killings*, 16 January 2014. Accessed February 5, 2022. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/16/south-sudan-ethnic-targeting-widespread-killings>

³Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, March 23, 2016. A/HRC/RES/31/20. Accessed April 4, 2022. https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/31/20

Making sense of the situation in South Sudan requires an ability to deal with a region in constant change, and where people seem to be constantly moving. A prediction made in 2005 by the then Minister for Finance, determined that “all of South Sudan will be a construction site for the next six years”, a metaphor that persists in the situation on the ground, with attempts to build a State amidst never-ending wars.⁴ With pessimism abound, war fatigued donor countries seemed to have left quietly the region that a decade ago, was the source of aspiring optimism. The US alone, had poured USD 14 billion into the hopes of seeing a democratic country ‘built from scratch’, a move that made South Sudanese academic Jok Madut mentioned it as an example that the West took the State-building task very serious.⁵

South Sudan’s complicated trajectory into statehood is best approached from its position in the long line of post-colonial States, as the second country in Africa, after Eritrea, to have attained independence through secession. Its historical existence had been determined by external pressures rather by any internal uniformity in the exercise of power.⁶ What united the south against the government located in Khartoum, was a collective sense of oppression and deprivation from the benefits attached to modernisation – something which is still felt. Excluded from power and wealth concentrated in Khartoum, it is thus unsurprising that South Sudan’s history has been marked by conflict. In the post-independence period, the ‘liberation’ heroes became entangled in on-going power struggles and were often found to be perpetrators of destruction, dispossession and wealth transfer. As South Sudanese and South Sudan specialists whom I have worked with and spoken to have commented, ‘history is repeating itself’. Previously, the transition towards peace involved disputes over land and borders, valuable resources, and a call for federalism to the southern region. Those disputes were quickly transplanted within the south, in a sad turn of events that pitted various groups against each other. Not even the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 to mark the end of the second civil war meant that guns were silenced. Reinventing South Sudan away from the north, had been an ambitious plan designed by the leaders of the SPLA rebellion and financed by the international community. And by that time, about 80% of South Sudanese

⁴Cited in Myers, 2010, pp194. *Out of the Earth Nation-Building in South Sudan*, The Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter 2010, Vol. 86, No. 1, pp. 190-199. Accessed March 23,2022.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26446347> ; IRIN, 2016. *South Sudan's never-ending war*, 12 October 2016. Accessed March 23, 2022. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/58061bb44.html>

⁵Gramer, 2018. “Remember South Sudan? Washington Would Prefer Not To.” Foreign Policy, October 4, 2018. Accessed March 9, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/quietly-angrily-washington-confronts-its-wayward-offspring-south-sudan-africa-diplomacy-foreign-aid-war-conflict-peace-deal-salva-kiir/>
Jok, 2017. *Breaking Sudan: The Search for Peace*. Oneworld Publications.

⁶de Simone, 2016. *State-building South Sudan. Discourses, Practices and Actors of a Negotiated Project (1999-2013)*, PhD thesis.

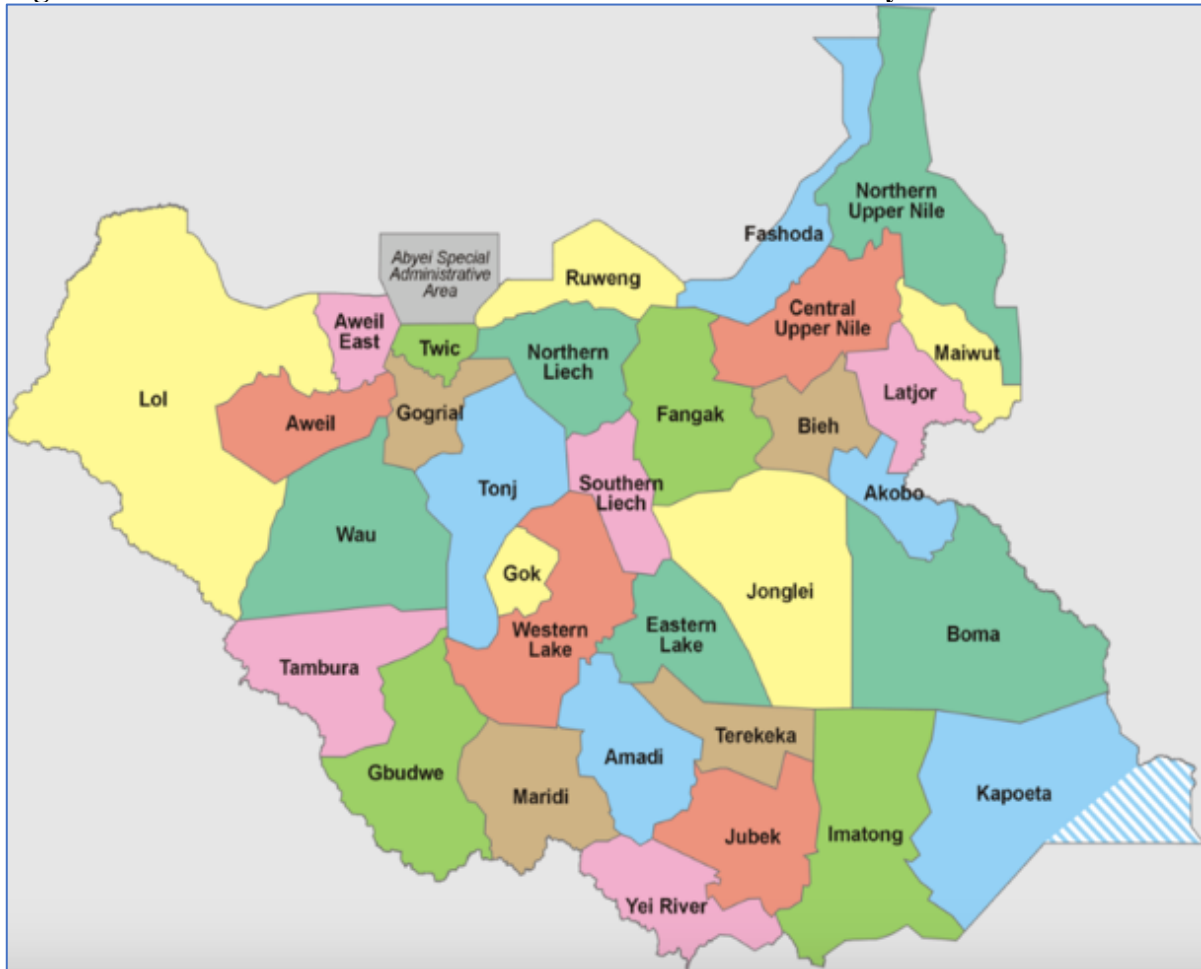
households were not living in their homes (Elnur, 2009). The situation regarding displacement, return and more generally, internal movement in South Sudan, remained in the background of the State-building focus. South Sudanese have oversimplified the State-building apparatus and what it took to accommodate returnees from the previous war. In the context of the conflict highlighted above, two key moments deserve special attention: On October 2, 2015, President Salva Kiir announced the creation of 28 States (order 36/2015), in what many interpreted as a move to reconfigure existing state boundaries, and much to the benefit of his own ethnic Dinka majority. The decision violated the peace agreement and the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, which officially recognises 10 states. The demarcation has caused a great deal of resentment among minority ethnic communities, who describe it as a land-grabbing measure aimed at increasing the control of the Dinka over vital resources, including oil. On 14 January 2017, President Kiir further exacerbated the situation by adding four more states by decree, bringing the total to 32.⁷

⁵Radio Tamazuj, 2015. “*Kiir and Makuei Want 28 States in S. Sudan*,” October 2, 2015. Accessed March 13, 2022. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/kiir-and-makuei-want-28-states-s-sudan> ; Sudan Tribune, 2017. “*South Sudanese President creates four more states*”, January 15, 2017. Accessed March 13, 2022. <https://sudantribune.com/article59623/>

Figure 1. The introduction of 28 states in South Sudan in October 2015.



Figure 2. The introduction of 32 states in South Sudan in January 2017.



This brief account of South Sudan’s contemporary whereabouts shows that the region defined as a ‘post-conflict’ context since July 2005, is very much akin to a situation described by Marielle Debos as “Interwar”, in reference to the attitude of people always waiting for the next war.⁸ In this view, interwar periods refer to the “spaces and times that are affected by violence even if there is no direct fighting between rebel and government forces” (2016:8). Indeed, although the CPA in South Sudan embodied a step towards a normalisation of the security situation, with the result of a referendum that led to independence, this did not represent a departure from the pre-existing situation. Unresolved problems such as the massive displacement that occurred during the Sudanese civil war (1983-2005), and the land disputes it

⁸Debos, 2016. *Living by the gun in Chad: Combatants, impunity and state formation*, Introduction, pp 6-7.

has created⁹, remained a feature of people's lives after South Sudan's independence, and their cumulative effect leaves open the question about the viability of the South Sudanese State.¹⁰

1.2. The origins of research and defining the State of South Sudan

These cumulative events formed the basis of research dedicated to studying the War to Peace transition in South Sudan. When the conflict broke out on December 2013, I was studying for a master's degree in development studies, writing about the Political Economy of Sudan's second civil war and the transition of the SPLA/M into a political party. The history of the region and the second Sudanese civil war had become an interest since 2005, when Sudan re-emerged in the news, ending what had been the longest-run African civil war. Immediately after finishing my Masters in Violence, Conflict and Development (VCD), I was in Sudan, as part of a university teaching experience, first at the University of Kordofan in El-Obeid, then in Khartoum. It was during this time in Sudan in 2015, that I began to draft the proposal for the present research in which this thesis is written about¹¹, so my inclination for this study had been cautiously planned and personally motivated. The objective had been to explore the war to peace transition process by looking at cross-border networks controlled by armed actors, and what this could offer by way of understanding the political and economic viability of the new State. This involved studying cross-border movements and the relationship between displaced communities split between South Sudan and Uganda. I decided to defer my doctoral studies upon an offer to work in South Sudan as a Protection Officer in August 2017. Although the time in South Sudan widened my perspectives and placed me in the forefront of a volatile and evolving situation, that experience is not featured in the present research. When I left South Sudan in August 2018, president Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar had just signed the peace agreement to end the civil war, which at that point, was the twelfth agreement the two have signed since the war started in 2013. Unlike previous attempts, Sudan's government became a signed guarantor of the R-ACRSS, along with neighbouring Uganda.¹²

⁹Most disputes have been over Sudan and South Sudan's borders and of population movement (Wassara et al. 2014; Johnson, 2010), in which the border demarcation as stipulated in the CPA remains unresolved. In Yei, a reorganisation of land occupation and of governance structures occurred as a result of war-related displacement, which is complicated due to a legal vacuum (Justin and van Leeuwen 2019).

¹⁰See for example ICG, 2021. "*Toward a viable future for South Sudan*".

¹¹Although I have revised and adapted my research proposal, which had been more focused on cross border networks between armed groups.

¹²The East African, 2018. "*The trouble with South Sudan's new peace deal*". September 29, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2022. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/new-south-sudan-deal-said-to-be-of-benefit-only-to-uganda-and-khartoum--1403576>

This adds a significant regional dimension in implementing the accords and offers the possibility of cutting off outside support for the factions as Sudan is the main financial backer of Machar just as Uganda is for Kiir.

Adding the historical arbitrariness of African borders and their complicated position in the process of State-making, there are grounds from which scholars, policy makers and enthusiasts alike have concerned themselves with trying to understand the African State, often from the departing point of failure, or by attributing to ‘post-conflict’ States in general, a blank slate.¹³ In this view, long term State-making processes have been disassociated from its new version, and constitute what Berman and Lonsdale have categorised “ ‘state building’ as a conscious process at creating an apparatus of control, and ‘state formation’ as an historical process whose outcome is a largely unconscious and contradictory process of conflicts, negotiations and compromise between diverse groups whose self-serving actions and trade-offs constitute the vulgarisation of power” (1992:5). South Sudan broadly fits this description, although its process has seen both versions merging, where past problems remained unresolved, and pile up on top of new challenges. State-making in this thesis is thus defined, having in mind a concept that challenges the notion of a fixed State, with a static population located within clearly defined borders. South Sudan may be defined as what Quirk and Vigneswaran (2015:4) regard as a “recent variation of a larger theme or subcategory that sits alongside many other subcategories” (outlined below on 1.2.3) where the messiness, contradictions, and uncertainties that are embodied in its complex war to peace transition, extends to South Sudan’s most important neighbours and the guarantors of its conflict resolution, Sudan and Uganda. When President Salva Kiir increased the total number of states in January 2017 to 32, his own ethnic group took most of the administrative areas, covering 42 per cent of the country (Radio Tamazuj,2015c). With such interests turned to elite power and resource allocations, support mobilisation centred along ethnic lines was also promoted, pitting competing groups against one another, and reinforcing a simplistic framing of an ‘ethnic war’.¹⁴

¹³Cramer, 2006. *Civil War is not a stupid thing*. Hurst Publishers.

¹⁴Ethnicity is often applied as a shorthand to explain the conflict in South Sudan. As Anyadike (2016) explains “The trigger for the 2013 civil war was essentially a political dispute based on internal SPLM opposition to Salva Kiir and drawn from multiple sources and ethnicities.”

1.2.1. Research in areas affected by insecurity

In this situation, it goes without saying that the logistical difficulty of traveling in South Sudan became even more prohibitive in recent years, and not the least, financially constraining. I had learned both from my previous work experience and others who have conducted their doctoral research before or just at the onset of the 2013 conflict.¹⁵ The situation had deteriorated in 2017 to the point where one does not simply use public transport, or walks unaccompanied within Juba, and international NGO workers followed strict curfews. The field research is located between the triple borderlands of South Sudan, Uganda and Eastern DRC, known as the West Nile region in present day Uganda. Insecurity due to heavy fighting concentrated near the borderland in 2016, extended also to Eastern DRC, where SPLA-IO factions have been hiding.¹⁶ In this region, the geographies of political and economic power have been historically allocated via changing patterns of cross-border trade and population movement, which become entangled with regional conflicts, and not always in straightforward ways.¹⁷ By the time I arrived in Uganda on August 4, 2019, the adverse effects from the Ebola epidemic in Eastern DRC have emerged in parts of Uganda, including Arua. Although not directly threatening to the West Nile region, the situation required caution during the later period of 2019.¹⁸ Meanwhile in South Sudan, tensions re-emerged, while the borderland and settlements experienced violent spurs during November and December 2019 (Chapter 5.4). These two scenarios required me to follow advice from local actors and colleagues to delay going to DRC and South Sudan respectively, until the situation was contained. I had planned to conduct research in Juba, in the market areas and the PoC, and to interview government and security personnel known through work and contacts. Research at the South Sudan National Archives had been planned directly with the staff through e-mail exchanges. Ultimately, as I took a break and left Uganda intending to return for three additional months, the COVID-19 pandemic

¹⁵I thank Diana Felix da Costa (2016), Rens Twijnstra (2014) and Lottie de Vries (2012) who kindly answered questions and shared insights at the initial phase of my research.

¹⁶The extension of the war posed grave threats to South Sudan's neighbours; On 13 August 2016, some 800 to 900 troops from SPLA Division VI launched an incursion into DRC, crossing the border and engaging in a battle with SPLA-IO. On 17 August, two MI-24 helicopters also crossed the border, travelling nearly 6 km into Congolese territory and again attacking SPLA-IO positions. UNSC Nov. 15, 2016. Downloaded from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/848624?ln=en>

¹⁷Pendle and Anei, 2018. *Wartime trade and the reshaping of power in South Sudan*.

Further in-depth accounts also highlight the role of trade and conflict during war. See Johnson (2003). *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*.

¹⁸See Reliefweb (2019). *Ebola Virus Disease Preparedness Updates-Arua*. Accessed February 3, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/ebola-virus-disease-preparedness-updates-arua-situation-report-no-19-22july-2019>

spread from late February 2020, and impeded my return to fieldwork. In my case, the fact that the research areas had been characterised by instability and occasional insecurity were secondary to the impact of COVID, which ultimately impeded a return to field research.

1.2.2. Setting temporal boundaries

This would invariably necessitate changes and adaptations to the original research plan, and ultimately, they did not include primary data collection in South Sudan. The scope of research had been limited in a very important way given that this thesis concerns South Sudan. To capture the context of the data collection in this case, is left entirely to the 137 interviews conducted in Uganda. To begin, the State-making project is situated in this study as emerging towards the end of the 1990s, although only formally initiated in 2005, when the signing of the CPA opened the possibility for a future independent South Sudan. The empirical material collected for this study, however, concerns the 2011-2020 period of post-independent South Sudan. The literature on conflict approaches to State-making was the initial body of work surveyed to make sense of the modern State-making enterprise and is addressed on Chapter 2 under the War to Peace umbrella: peace agreements, fragile State theory, UN-led interventions have all pervaded in the modern literature about South Sudan in the past as part of Sudan, and since its formal conception as a State in 2011.

Research participants' disposition to make comparisons between the previous war (1983-2005) and "this one" (2013-2020) helped set the time span of this research, with some degree of flexibility. Since the SPLA/M had embarked on an effort to promote itself as a movement capable of bringing development to the southern region in the later part of the 1990s¹⁹, the data collection also draws from these earlier times in the memory of my research participants. Individual interviews set the 'shifting' of opinions many research participants had held in favour of the former rebels they now say had "turned against civilians" (Chapter 5). A significant part of the data cleaning process came through the interpretation of transcripts, written down from the audio recorder and notes taken during the six months of field research. Ultimately, the data collected addresses the current conflict in South Sudan, which in this thesis includes the period between 2013 and 2020, when the R-ARCSS was finally agreed on February 2020, less than 3 weeks after I left Uganda. This is the period in which my research

¹⁹Johnson (2003); De Vries (2012). *Facing Frontiers; The everyday practice of state-building in South Sudan. PhD Thesis.*

participants mostly referred to, although many have also located the onset of the current mass displacement in the follow up to the referendum for independence in 2011 (Chapter 6.2).

1.2.3. Outline of the displacement situation

Displacement in South Sudan became a major international concern by July 2017, when UNHCR recorded one million South Sudanese in northern Uganda, and Bidibidi refugee settlement in Yumbe had become the worlds' largest. From an estimated population of 12 million, over 2 million were made refugees, and almost 2 million became internally displaced (IDPs) by December 2017.²⁰ The R-ARCSS initially signed in September 2018, was finally agreed on February 22, 2020, although several opposition forces refused to sign it, citing that the root causes of the conflict continue unaddressed and have instead, called for its renegotiation.²¹ The agreement also reverted the 32 states back to the previous 10, adding further problems to on-going practices of boundary divisions, land grabbing and land rights.²² This means that, immediately after I had left the field, the situation of South Sudan had already embarked on a new phase. Under the terms of the agreement, South Sudan is now governed by a Revitalized Transitional Government of national Unity (RTGoNU), led by a cabinet of 35 ministers, though not without contestation.²³

Although these events unfolded shortly after the field research, the tension attached to the lack of commitment and the apparent disdain for the fate of civilians from the part of South Sudan's government and opposition parties were expressive after the November 2019 delay. As conflict belligerents took opportunistic actions in the recruitment of young men and women from the Ugandan settlements, called to return to locations near Nimule.²⁴ The location of the settlements near the border with South Sudan is thus an important and strategic poll to South Sudanese armed actors and political figures who source physical, material and loyal support from ethnic kin and allies. Ugandans pay attention to these developments that feel too close to home with

²⁰UNHCR, 2017. *South Sudan situation*. Accessed March 21, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/593e9e9b7.pdf>

²¹These were notably General Thomas Cirillo of the NSA, and members of the South Sudan United Front/Army. See UNSC, April 9, 2019, art. 17.

²²Africa News, February 20, 2020. "South Sudan's president agrees to have 10 states". Accessed March 23, 2022. <https://www.africanews.com/2020/02/15/south-sudan-s-president-agrees-to-have-10-states/>

²³Radio Tamazuj, March 12, 2020. "South Sudan's Kiir names cabinet". Accessed March 28, 2022. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudan-s-kiir-names-cabinet> ; The East African, February 29, 2020. "South Sudan split over who takes what ministry". Accessed March 28, 2022. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/South-Sudan-split-over-who-takes-what-ministry/4552908-5473706-mgdj38z/index.html>

²⁴See Alex De Waal et al., 2019. *South Sudan: The Politics of Delay*.

the not-so-distant memories of the LRA insurgency in northern Uganda. The securitisation of the South Sudanese-Uganda borderland has made headlines since South Sudan's independence and its fast descent into generalised conflict. Roadblocks and checkpoints manned by UPDF and the police on the Ugandan side, also become integrated into the regional political economy of displacement and of mobility patterns, two important features of this thesis.

Finally, the disjuncture between policy and practice in cross border mobility is felt by South Sudanese residing in the settlements who remain sceptical about forfeiting their refugee status for the option of local integration. As a result of political instability in South Sudan and its free-fall economy, having to compete with host communities for jobs and access to services in Uganda predominated in the qualitative data collected. Thus, the evaluation of the experiences of South Sudanese who adapt during displacement in the context of South Sudan's conflict (Chapter 5), form the basis of discussions about livelihood, citizenship and notions of belonging, key sub-categories among those explored in association with statehood.

1.2.4. The Challenges

The research undertaken required several choices to be made during and after fieldwork, when COVID-19 prevented me from resuming three months of further field research. The coincidence of a pandemic with global proportion necessitating a mass-scale obstruction and control of the movement of people, goods and services everywhere, invoked thinking about how much we come to depend upon such a mundane ability, and just how much is at stake when of freedom of movement ceases to be an act of individual choice. For this, the impact it had on the full conduct of research was immediate, and I had not prepared for a situation where it would also be possible to continue with data collection remotely. While in the field, the issue of crossing international borders was dealt by limiting my presence at border crossings from the Ugandan side, if I discount my clumsy arrival in Congo on two occasions where I missed the 'invisible border'. Not being able to return and complete the three final months of research posed a great obstacle to the completion of data collection and objective of the research. Yet, the political situation around January 2020 demanded care with a cross-border research plan, as "everyone is just concentrating in this peace now"²⁵.

²⁵Personal communication, Arua, 04/01/2020.

As a result, I became part of a vast group of researchers affected by the lack of access to the field which came to a halt during 2020. Uganda itself had imposed one the world's strictest lockdowns, first in March 2020, and then again in June 2021.²⁶ There was a lot of confusion and uncertainties over how to move forward with field research abroad and the challenges we face are certainly one of a kind to those facing similar dilemmas. An incomplete field research required careful reflection on how move on to write a thesis about South Sudan without having conducted fieldwork there. What's more, as a self-funded researcher, additional challenges led me to pause the doctoral research during 2021, to eventually resume it remotely in 2022, and focus on writing the dissertation.

1.3. The importance in studying displacement alongside State-making processes.

Population displacement and the impacts they bring are harder to ignore. The amount and scope of research, analyses and studies made on internal and cross border displacement (Adeola,2020; Betts,2013, 2020; IOM,2020) are proof of the need to advance knowledge about how displacement infers lasting changes not only to the immediate affected population, but to host communities and the environment inhabited by both. Consequently, displacement constitutes an intriguing feature of modern-day mobility; its entanglement within notions of immobility and mobility forces us to pay attention to evidence-based pursuits. Hence, the situation of South Sudan is of empirical value to the broad pursuit of answering how displacement helps us understand modern State-making processes. Over the past few years, an increased interest on the issue has grown beyond the field of migration studies. Spurred by the Mediterranean 'crisis', and EU Trust Fund for Africa's attempt to stop migration out of the continent, evidence of the increase in movement, particularly in the form of violence-induced displacement, sprung everywhere. By the end of 2020, according to UNHCR, there are 91 million displaced people.²⁷

²⁶UNDP, African Borderlands Centre, December 2020. "*The Informal Cross-Border Trade along the Uganda-DRC border.*" Borderland Policy Briefing Series. Downloaded from: <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/issue-briefs/borderland-policy-briefing-series---informal-cross-border-drc-ug.html> ; Titeca, 2021. *How COVID-19 affected informal cross border trade between Uganda and DRC*, The Conversation. Accessed March 27, 2022. <https://theconversation.com/how-covid-19-affected-informal-cross-border-trade-between-uganda-and-drc-160124>

²⁷UNHCR, 2020. "*Global report on displacement.*" Accessed February 2, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globalreport/>

Yet, despite studies made on and about displacement, there is little understanding about its long-term and multiplying impacts of displacement, and the effects to the displaced.²⁸ This thesis proposes that displacement is a form of movement (1.6.2), aware that there is more to consider on the condition of displacement beyond a humanitarian concern with durable solutions. The study of cross border movement in situations of protracted displacement can document in various ways, the transformations displacement brings to the social, economic and political spectrums of States involved. With South Sudanese displaced communities inflating the settlements near the borderland, their presence also alerts both South Sudanese and Ugandan authorities to form a robust border security apparatus that manages and controls cross border movements. To address concerns over the borderland's peace and security, the 2014 African Union Border Programme (AUBP) set out to achieve complete border demarcation by 2017. However, the deterioration of security and intensification of displacement following the July 2016 violence that spread out of Juba, meant the deadline has been extended to 2022.²⁹

Studies about the State, Mobility and Borders, despite being fields in their own right, combined, reinforce the background to interpretations about a 'duality of life' with a multi-site reality observed by the transnational encounter of people, services and ideas populating the spaces between States. Far from being cast as the weak periphery, African borderlands have gathered strength as sites of opportunities to a diverse range of identities which the central State struggles to control. And despite of the advances made in the promotion of regional trade integration agreements now underway³⁰, research on borderland areas today show that many such sites are characterised by violence and insecurity, undermining the expansion of a continental-wide, much less regional, free market economy.³¹ Such borderlands become part of the global security apparatus, and South Sudan encapsulates such characteristics in many aspects.

²⁸The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) thematic series launched in November 2017 has looked into the dynamics between internal and cross-border displacement. Available at:

<https://www.internal-displacement.org/research-areas/internal-to-cross-border-displacement>

²⁹Africa Union Peace and Security Meeting, June 1, 2018. *Statement on the delimitation of borders*. Downloaded from: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.777.press.statement.delimitation.of.borders.01.06.2018.pdf>

³⁰Added to existing regional trade integration agreements, the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) entered into force on 30 May 2019. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://afcfta.au.int/en>

³¹These characteristics, however, are not uniform. As an example, Nugent and Soi (2020) research in the Ugandan borders with Kenya and Tanzania identified a lack of securitization and violence in the borders accessed; a different situation is found when accessing the border crossings researched in this thesis (Private communication with the author).

1.4. Theoretical framework and contributions

In the last thirty years, State-making has become the convergence point of international development and security interventionism (Badiey,2014). Populations displaced by conflicts face both development and humanitarian needs that run alongside (in)security, which may interfere with an interest to plan and implement durable solutions. A theoretical framework that follows on from *Mobility Makes States* – broadly points to what type of State-society relations can emerge from the twin process of mass displacement and State-making, explored in the four main empirical Chapters 4,5,6 and 7. To propose that displacement is integrated in the State-making processes in South Sudan, I consider the variations in the way displacement, borders and the State have been studied, defined and understood (Chapter 2). The qualitative data primarily dealing with displacement experiences led to the conceptual framework of *multi-site living* (Chapter 4 and 5) which is defined on section 1.4.2, first-hand accounts from former combatants addressed the fragmentation of civil-military relationships in South Sudan, and the ethnicization of power structures resulting from it, which leads to the exclusion of particular ethnicities from social and economic lives in the settlements (Chapter 6). Anchored to these, are the regional cross-border economy and non-oil resource extraction that feeds the army and rebel movements in a not straightforward way, while Ugandan markets and transportation systems emerged and re-oriented to cater for the displaced (Chapter 7). These accounts are mostly relied on exiting and on-going research and documentation on the political economy or armed conflict, the illicit cross-border trade in the region, and also, the socio-economic re-configuration in the borderlands between Uganda and South Sudan through high population movements.

The three main sets of literature concerning the State, Mobility and Borders, provide the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation which together, reinforce a conceptual and theoretical endeavour that argues the South Sudanese displacement “makes the State” of South Sudan in the current phase. The research draws especially from the edited volumes *Mobility Makes States* (Quirk and Vigneswaran,2015) and *Displacement Economies* (Hammar,2014).³² Quirk and Vigneswaran’s collection of case-studies from across pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa on the foundational role mobility has had in the formation of African States. Despite the valuable advancements these collections make, almost all case studies

³²Quirk and Vigneswaran (eds), 2015. “*Mobility Makes States: Migration and power in Africa.*”; Hammar (eds), 2014. “*Displacement Economies in Africa: Paradoxes of Crisis and Creativity.*”

represent countries in a non-war situation, and a great deal of them are located in Southern Africa. As a result, an interest on research about the complicated relationship between armed actors and civilians, and on how production and markets are sustained during active conflict and widespread violence emerged. This brings attention to sources of power and relationships between actors across territories; the logistics of security and transportation, which combined, transform political economies based on uneven access to livelihoods. With South Sudanese having experienced displacement multiple times, this thesis broadly contributes to the literature on how displacement becomes integrated in modern State-making practices. In ‘Displacement and state making in Zimbabwe’ (2008), Hammar argues that State-induced displacements are not an anomaly, but rather, an ever-present possibility and practice integral to contemporary as well as past modes of rule and State-making. She notes that, “States and their allies make discursive use of notions of sovereignty to legitimise violence and displacement against selective citizens in the service of different projects at multiple scales.”³³

Opening the discussion about the impacts of displacement, Hammar’s (2014) volume ‘Displacement Economies’ combines empirical insights from multiple fields, challenging us to look beyond displacement as a crisis, and examine the adaptation and innovation of the economies that persist in, and even result from such disruptive situations. The discussions on displacement economies in Africa emerges as a source of knowledge about the large influence displacement has on the economy and, to address the lack of systematic research on this topic. The way in which displacement takes hold of life in South Sudan is however, compromised by a lack of understanding the experiences of displacement in a country whose history is marked by conflict. The procurement of food and maintenance of vital livelihood systems is equally dependent upon mobility, whether it means access to nearby gardens, a cattle camp, or a river. These activities have been affected by violence, climate and insecurity, where reports of women being attacked on their way to gardens or to collect firewood pervade reports on sexual violence; cattle raids and generalised attacks have increased to the extent where families reduce the number of cattle to avoid raids and reduce their own movements which are marked by danger (Chapter 5). These features of South Sudanese life have been transformed during the civil war and call for an analysis on the effects of displacement, and from which notions of mobility and fixidity derive from.

³³Hammar, 2008. “*In the name of sovereignty: Displacement and state making in post-independence Zimbabwe*”. Three cases are used as evidence to general patterns that link displacement, sovereignty and State-making.

Ultimately, the research contributes to the State literature, zooming on how the State of South Sudan promotes displacement to advance its goals, and what are the effects on the population displaced. The research thus offers insights into the experience of a subset of displaced South Sudanese inhabiting multiple environments in Uganda, many who perform cross-border movements back and forth to South Sudan. In consideration to efforts at regional trade integration in East Africa, site of IDPs and refugee settlements located near borderlands pose significant questions to the sustainability of trade and transportation routes that informally include such housing structures in their plans (Chapter 7). With South Sudan tested during its first decade as an independent State, the complexity of its fragile political and economic whereabouts is further undermined by the mass displacement of civilians who, to the central government, pose a threat to its internal and international legitimacy.

1.4.1. The South Sudanese State

In South Sudan, the longer process of forming a State, in which traditional rules and laws developed, runs in parallel and in contrast to the more technical version, with its western-imposed model.³⁴ This has brought enormous implications to diverse groups' social and economic organisation, and how authority is understood and exercised within these communities. South Sudan's conception has been largely a design of US and the UN intentions towards liberal peacebuilding and the more technical version of State-building. As a direct side effect, South Sudan has automatically attracted interest to the issue of border demarcation, a contentious and unresolved problem in the region, along with the future of the nomadic and mobile populations who have for centuries crossed borders with their livelihoods. Beyond this, groups who have led a more settled life, have been increasingly affected by the imposition of new internal state borders South Sudan. First with the independence attained, and second, with the notion that now "each group will stay in their own place"³⁵, some research participants delved into their interpretations of, and expectations about the central government, when their newfound sense of freedom from the north came in 2011. Throughout the thesis, expressions of the South Sudanese State rarely come directly, dwarfed by the popular framing of violence prosecuted by particular ethnic groups, often at the orders of their respective leaders. Beginning thus with chapter 4, an exploration on relevant debates and recurring sources of violence and

³⁴de Simone (2016). *State-building South Sudan. Discourses, Practices and Actors of a Negotiated Project (1999-2013)*. PhD thesis, 2016.

³⁵ Interview with female South Sudanese, Rhino Settlement, 29/08/2019. See details on Chapter 5.2.

conflict involving South Sudanese society and the central government, and its southern neighbours – Uganda and to a less extent DRC – the first empirical chapter locates, frames and interprets how individual and collective experiences connect to the way in which South Sudan emerges through continuous transformation. Along such process, mobility has emerged as a threat to the power and control from the centre in post-colonial African States.

1.4.2. Mobility

While migration studies include the body of work that studies mobile and contingently settled populations across borders, in exile and in diasporas, it undermines the way in which mobility can inform how and why States seek to capitalise on dislodging citizens to satisfy the interests of elites. Mobility in Africa remains an under researched sub-field of Migration studies, despite significant explorations and initiatives taken in the past twenty years, with research on ‘Mobile Africa’ rejecting the idea that various forms of mobility are indicative of the breakdown of society.³⁶ Colonial mapping exercises in Africa were also fundamentally at odds with the processes of border-making which many African societies use. In South Sudan, the British tried to ‘fix’ individuals into territorially bounded units, attempting to render groups that were often mobile as static, with bounded entities (Schomerus and Allen, 2016). What’s more, Johnson (2010:15) noted that these maps were often imprecise, and not intended to absolutely demarcate space, but to delineate units of administrative responsibility. As a result, these borders tended to obscure the dynamic usage of spaces by different groups, who penetrated different areas of land at different times. Land disputes, as well as rights to move by certain groups are part of South Sudan’s internal status of continuous conflict. Although the present research does not include primary data of this kind from South Sudan, it relies on the accounts of South Sudanese displaced to Uganda, who had their land and assets taken from them. In what became the largest mass population movement since 1992, the more recent population movement formed a mix of old and new routes, with varying sets of motivations.

Mobility is defined broadly in this thesis, as constituting the short or long-term movement of people from one place to another (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015:4). Given the above, the identification of a *multi-site strategy* is defined based on the conditions of displacement of a sub-set of South Sudanese in northern Uganda, who forge a more permanent presence in the

³⁶Bruijn, R.A.M., van Dijk, and D.W.J. Foeken (eds), 2001. *Mobile Africa: An Introduction*. Brill.

settlements and urban areas, while holding onto ways to access South Sudan. This concerns why and how South Sudanese research participants move, and why and how the GoSS seeks to direct their movements (away from their home areas), which requires a cross-border analytical framework. A satisfactory account of cross-border movements among displaced South Sudanese in times of conflict, however, was not possible, as it was paused due to the changes imposed by travel restrictions in 2020 under COVID. Despite this, cross-border movements, as well as its importance as a source of power to the centre and peripheries deserves to be explored and better understood in South Sudan and its southern borderland.

1.4.3. Boundaries and Borders

Cross-border movements in Africa came to represent a new turn in the political and economic administration, labour markets and governance of post-colonial States, though lacking an understanding about the relationship between the newly independent States, their citizens, and in turn, their relationships as defined by the borders maintained through the 1964 OAU summit, and now its successor, the African Union (AU). Most border conflicts in South Sudan arose along its borders with Sudan; a border that to the present day remains to be fully delineated and demarcated. In an interesting recurrence to the colonial period, a major source for those charged with border demarcation are maps and other cartographic material substantially from the British colonial archives.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, the delineations on these maps are not often accurate or specific and remain open to conflicting interpretations. Nicki Kindersley, who worked at the South Sudan National Archives, wrote about British colonial cartography that “there’s no one map that shows, in sufficient detail, where the border exactly is in 1956”.³⁸ At that time, the urgency to fix a date for Sudan’s independence meant that no survey was made of any internal boundaries prior to independence, leaving a vacuum in understanding what those boundaries were on that date. Thus, when the time came to agree on the boundaries between Sudan and South Sudan, authorities charged with the process of boundary demarcation admitted that “full demarcation would be impossible before January 2011 referendum” (Johnson 2010:18).

³⁷Joseph, 2013. “*Missing maps: Where are the colonial-era maps of the South Sudan-Sudan border?*”, The Niles, 6 February 2013. Accessed April 5, 2022. <http://www.theniles.org/articles/?id=1677>

³⁸Kindersley, 2013. “*Maps of the Sudan border: the endless conversation*”, 8 January 2013. Accessed April 8, 2022. <https://internallydisplaced.wordpress.com/2013/01/08/maps-of-the-sudan-border-the-endless-conversation/>

To the south, the history of the South Sudan-Uganda borders has a similar fate, corresponding to recent tensions over border demarcation in Kajokeji County (now in South Sudan) and Moyo District (in Uganda). As Leonardi and Santschi (2016:24) point out, these highlight the “growing importance and intersection of national and ethnic identities, experiences of wartime cross border displacement and the uncertainties of a shifting borderline.” The southern borders between Sudan, Uganda and Congo DRC were adjusted several times before 1914 and include claims about the old extension of the border as far as Lake Albert. These historical trajectories are relevant to contemporary explorations about the internal sub-division of state boundaries during the civil war and the mass displacement in South Sudan, and whether they are connected to a practice of ‘population engineering’ (Chapter 2.10) according to the South Sudan Human Rights Commission report (UNSC, Sept. 19, 2016).

1.5. The Research Questions

The main research question developed for this dissertation, and the four sub-questions which are addressed in the empirical chapters, reflect a concern with the way in which South Sudan’s civil war and the mass displacement that followed, disrupted the procurement of livelihoods and mobility. With the displaced South Sudanese disproportionately found in northern Uganda, the data collected which addresses each question, assumes a more critical view of the State of South Sudan from across its borders. The borderlands shared between South Sudan, Uganda and Eastern DRC offer an opportunity to reassess existing patterns of cross-border mobility that overlap with cross-border displacement, to understand what is happening in South Sudan. The empirical material that guides the direction of analysis required the re-framing of the main question, after the obstacles imposed during the lifecycle of field research (Chapter 3.4). Although displacement is often associated with violent conflict, this thesis moves away from a monocausal explanation of an “ethnic civil war”, commonly attributed to the violence in South Sudan. Additionally, as the viability of the modern State is significantly attributed to the economy, cross-border trade acquires an epistemological interest, in that the border is thought about in economic terms (UNCTAD 2019). Yet, trade precedes the imposition of borders, and this complicates access to data on South Sudan’s non-oil economy at large, by being heavily dependent on cross-border relationships and access.³⁹

³⁹As noted by Twijnstra (2014:22), there are no import data for South Sudan before 2011, making it very difficult to study the economy at large. The domestic non-oil production and manufacturing capacities had remained

Thus, the application of a mobility framework allows for an explorative set of questions that documents the experiences of South Sudanese with cross-border displacement during the 2013-2020 conflict to guide the direction of enquiry. The main question this thesis sets out to address is, **in what ways does displacement becomes integrated in the State-making process of South Sudan**, thus exploring the linkages between violence-induced displacement, cross-border trade and (post-displacement) mobility patterns. Below, the four questions are addressed in the following empirical chapters:

Chapter 4: How does GoSS reacts to population displacement, and what does this mean to its relationship with neighbouring states such as Uganda and DRC?

Chapter 5: How do South Sudanese embrace opportunities and deal with the limitations created by human displacement?

Chapter 6: How do armed actors and conflict-affected communities coordinate to maintain production and access to services?

Chapter 7: How is cross border trade implicated in the political and economic development of South Sudan?

In the coming empirical chapters, the above questions are used as an umbrella under which a series of topics are presented by research participants, in reference to the civil war and the displacement, the cross-border and settlement economy, and the ways in which South Sudanese procure a livelihood on both sides of the border. Substantial views emerged about the civil war and the impact on civilians, which may sound very familiar to existing patterns of violence against civilians, relationships between civilians and authorities and coping mechanisms adopted by the affected population. Yet, trying to make sense of the paradoxical relationship between State-making processes and forced displacement highlights the complexities of resolving South Sudan's post-independence conflicts.

nominal, relying almost exclusively on both food and non-food imports from Uganda and Kenya. See *On the State of Business: Trade, Entrepreneurship and Real Economic Governance In South Sudan*, PhD thesis, 2014.

1.6. Mobility, Displacement and State-making

The ability to fix populations within a State is assumed to be a source of considerable power of the State over society (Richmond and MacGinty, 2019). Yet this notion stands at odds with what is conceived to be the main characteristic of borders. Achille Mbembe, on a seminal article written for *African Arguments*, ‘The idea of a borderless world’, argued that “There is no conceivable border outside of the principle of the law of permeability”, and thus, “mobility was the motor of any kind of social or economic or political transformation. In fact, it was the driving principle behind the delimitation and organisation of space and territories.”⁴⁰

With the intense cross border influx of South Sudanese to Uganda, which in 2017 reached 1 million, security concerns quickly rose along the borderland shared between South Sudan and Uganda, and tensions around border demarcation re-emerged. This situation shows that the State is not a fixed entity, and mobility in Africa can be defined within the logic of ‘border permeability’, superseding laws aimed to control, promote or prevent the movement of individuals across a State’s borders.⁴¹

Given the above, the research methods with regards to cross-border dynamics, led to two key movements observed across research sites: between Ugandan settlements and urban areas, and between Uganda and South Sudan (Chapter 5.2.2) The research pays attention to how those displaced during the South Sudanese civil war practice mobility in the pursuit of better livelihoods and security. Another aspect of the impacts from the civil war and the displacement, is the intensified cross-border movement of small-scale traders and drivers who make possible in many ways, the maintenance of a diversified network of social and economic relations; between the South Sudanese and Ugandan States, and between communities on both sides of the border (Chapter 7). Displacement thus, enables other forms of mobility to emerge, and contests the notion of ‘fixidity’ attributed to western notions of the State.

1.6.1. Embracing a multi-site research and unpredictable situations

The field research, with all the exhaustion and setbacks it has brought me, was also unexpectedly rewarding. I drew maps to locate checkpoints and roadblocks for reference; transport routes between Ugandan towns, settlements and Juba and take note of price lists to

⁴⁰Mbembe, 2018. *The idea of a borderless world*, in *Africa is a country*. November 11, 2018. Accessed April 29, 2022. <https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world>

⁴¹As noted in the volume by Quirk and Vigneswaran, 2015. *Mobility Makes States*.

compile an economic portfolio of the region in present time. Travel distances and fare prices varied according to the type of transportation and I quickly had to learn the alternatives to reach a location on short notice. Navigating through a vast territory, and where most travel occurred on *murram* roads at the mercy of the weather, made for a multi-site research filled with situations that added more meaning to techniques such as ‘follow the people’, ‘follow the thing’, and follow the story’ (Marcus 1995), which I incorporate on my methodology (Chapter 3). Making a living while displaced in the context of conflict and insecurity, necessitates the researcher being attentive to details across different locations, access routes and within the market economy that runs between urban, rural and the settlement environment. This exploratory technique brought me to navigate between urban refugee/diaspora restaurants and hotels, transportation systems in urban and settlement areas, settlement markets, border markets and such, observing the many faces of displacement and how individuals juggle between identities to try and get the best out of a difficult situation.

A political economy approach to displacement can also help make invisible dynamics resurface. However, many details of personal accounts required discretion and careful attention not to expose research participants to harm. For this reason, the ethical process and participant consent for the research study involved both UK and Ugandan academic approval and are explained on Chapter 3.

While travelling between various field sites and building relationships with members of local and displaced communities, the status of the relationship between members of the host communities and the displaced proved complex and at times, subjected to incidents and political decisions taken across the border in South Sudan. Relationships between Ugandan authorities, the displaced, and between different ethnic groups among South Sudanese in the settlements, and in urban areas were equally observed and analysed, and together, they helped bring the invisible dynamics of new relationships that emerged in the borderland.

1.6.2. Displacement as a form of movement: exploring *Multi-site Living* among South Sudanese

The amount of variation in the data collection informs also interpretations about how the South Sudanese displacement is situated within a discourse about cross-border movement. Communities displaced from South Sudan (and the wider region for that matter) look for ways to augment their livelihood prospects and opportunities to access education and health services, thus even the idea of being legally a refugee, does not mean that life is limited to the confines

of the settlement or the urban area one lives in Uganda. Previous research conducted during the 1990s and 2000s noted the habit of South Sudanese to adhere to a ‘circular’ (Kaiser 2010:52) or ‘pendular’ (REACH,2018) movement.⁴² Whichever term applied, the common wisdom remained for a long time stuck on the idea that these movements referred to seasonal patterns of migration, as in the case of pastoralists and nomadic groups, or labour migrants. With the rise of long-term displacement of refugees however, we are forced to think on the long-term impacts of such ‘disruptions’ to affected societies, their neighbours and the State(s) involved. Kaiser (2006:609) in particular, has noted of refugees in Uganda during the 1990s and 2000s that, “a significant number of people are not fixed in either a settlement or a non-settlement context, but somehow bridge the gap between the two, deriving advantages from each.”⁴³ Within this notion of a ‘duality of life’, South Sudanese displaced are observed engaging with a practice I call ‘*multi-site living*’, in the context of the 2013-2020 conflict. The combined qualitative methods helped document different lived experiences of *multi-site living* (Chapter 4,5) and its limitation (Chapter 6.4) that expose more complex circumstances and adaptability among displaced, other than what practitioners and researchers mostly document on. Advances made in research methods and analyses have recently paid more interest in displacement and mobility between Ugandan settlements and South Sudan as a continuum.⁴⁴ They serve to further encourage knowledge about how societies react, adapt and rework livelihood systems while displaced.

1.7. Chapter Plans

This Chapter introduced the main focus and context of this research and outlined the theoretical and methodological underpinnings and empirical contributions pursuit in the dissertation.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review where the three major fields of study – the State, Mobility and Borders- guide an overview of the literature within the context of the research undertaken. I identify the following research pursuit as part of the interdisciplinary nature in

⁴²Kaiser, 2010. ‘Dispersal, Division and Diversification: Durable Solutions and Sudanese Refugees in Uganda’. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 4(1): 44–60.

REACH, 2018b. *Situation Overview: Regional Displacement of South Sudanese, March 2018*. Accessed May 23, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/situation-overview-regional-displacement-south-sudanese-march-2018>

⁴³Kaiser, 2006. ‘Between a Camp and a Hard Place: Rights, Livelihood and Experiences of the Local Settlement System for Long-Term Refugees in Uganda’. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(4): 597–621.

⁴⁴See for example Vancluysen (2021) and O’Byrne and Ogeno (2020).

which studies about the State, Mobility and Border/lands can provide complementarities to the understanding of forms of displacement and State-making practices.

Chapter 3 discusses in depth the research approach and methodology. It examines researching in contexts of relative instability and of uncertainty, particular to the condition of displacement. It then proposes a conceptual and epistemological way of exploring and analysing displacement and State-making process in South Sudan as part of the same phenomenon.

Chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7 predominantly inform the field research, with 4 and 5 paired together. Through narrative discourse, the chapters document how South Sudanese households remarkably employ strategies to survive and keep safe in the Ugandan settlements, and by conducting cross border trips back to South Sudan, which I call '*multi-site living*'.

Chapter 4 sets the narrative bridging the past and the contemporary role of internal and external boundary-making, as it became relevant to the South Sudanese State. I bring the focus to the southern borderlands, to reflect the regional displacement and the mobility dynamics in the creation of the Lado Enclave, where it matters for populations historically inhabiting what came to be known as Zaire/Congo DRC, Uganda and Southern/South Sudan.

Chapter 5 builds from the previous chapter and delves into the interviews with displaced South Sudanese in Uganda, to highlight the opportunities and limitations that emerge from the condition of displacement. With the premise that violence transcends the borders of South Sudan to 'follow people', the chapter provides a number of cases that reflect the structural, social and political ramifications of adapting to a situation I call '*multi-site living*'.

Chapter 6 relies chiefly on interviews with former combatants and relatives of active combatants in South Sudan. It conveys the loss of trust between former combatants and government officials, as well as civilians, towards those tasked with 'liberating' South Sudan. In this chapter, I also explain the setbacks and security concerns that emerged while conducting research for this second strand of data collection.

Chapter 7 examines the cross-border mobility and the politics of transportation systems between selected Ugandan urban areas (Arua and Adjumani) and South Sudan (Juba), and between settlements (Bidibidi) and South Sudan, in the context of the civil war. It presents

examples of economic incentives and opportunities for the practice of *multi-site living*, that serves to mitigate against mobility restrictions based on identity, gender, socio-economic background and security. Such practices run in parallel with existing cross-border economic activities.

Finally, **Chapter 8** provides the final general reflections on the central themes of this dissertation, an evaluation of the questions posed in this thesis, and a general conclusion and future suggestions to advance the conceptual framework of *multi-site living*, within the paradoxes of population displacement and modern State-making processes.

CHAPTER 2

War and Peace in South Sudan

2.1. Introduction

I approach the argument that South Sudan provides a strong example of why displacement must be integrated in State-making processes and how we come to understand them, through a pragmatic approach to the interdisciplinary research conducted in this project. A thematic literature review with a focus on the State – in particular the African State literature-Border/land studies and Migration, to which displacement is understood to constitute a sub-category, informs the background for the empirical chapters 4, 5,6 and 7.

Within the discipline of International Development, the thematic literature review encompasses a wide range of sub-disciplines which in this research are identified as State-making processes, with a focus on South Sudan (and its position within the Great Lakes and the Horn of African countries), African border/lands studies and studies about displacement and mobility, within the scope of the region.

2.2. A different kind of War to Peace transition

“I was part of the polling centre. When we were trained at the campaign, we were told to separate from Sudan with the aim that we would remain South Sudanese. When we were with Sudan, there was oppression from Khartoum. The motivation was to be relieved from the oppression. Later on, most of us came to regret it, because when we separated from Sudan, we discovered that the oppression that took place then, was again in South Sudan. We came to regret it, because most of the people in Government are from one tribe, and this has caused divisions and conflicts which resulted in the situation where we are now in the refugee camps.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 05-09-2019

When Southern Sudanese went to the polls on January 9, 2005, a new phase in the long history of conflict in what was then the largest country in Africa had begun, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) six months later, on July 9, 2005.⁴⁵ The following six years of a fragile peace agreement produced a wealth of speculations on the future of Southern Sudan within a centralised State they hardly ever felt part of. The failure of then President Bashir to make the unity of Sudan attractive, often reinforced through practices that subverted the southern region, contributed to the massive vote in favour of secession on July 9, 2011. An

⁴⁵As a conflict resolution settlement between the GoSS and the SPLA/M, the CPA made provisions for the exercise of the right of self-determination to the southern region through a referendum to take place on January 2011.

overwhelming desire to part from its parent government, however, had been long in the making, and the extensive coverage of the history of what is now the region of South Sudan is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The transitional period between 2005 and 2011, and in particular afterwards, is narrated by scholars and commentators, who pointed out the layers of problems Sudan and Southern Sudan piled one on top of the other in a long history of conflict, which extends back to the colonial administration.⁴⁶ The partition of Sudan is all the more exceptional in post-colonial Africa, changing once again the cartographic lines of the continent, because it shows that the policies that the Organisation of African Union (OAU) had upheld – to maintain the inherited colonial borders - can be undone.⁴⁷ The international community's preference for the status quo regarding the emergence of new States, makes the recognition of secessionist claims outside the colonial context a very difficult affair.⁴⁸ The severing of territorial borders, however, is a recurrent practice not particular to Africa. At present, lessons will be learned from active secessionist movements in Europe and elsewhere.⁴⁹ And not least, inter-state border disputes, many which have awoken from unresolved past conflicts, are also on the rise (Okumu,2009; Beluci,2010; Oduntan,2015).⁵⁰ This calls for a better way of qualifying a War to Peace transition within the State-building literature, without losing sight of the challenges of diversity in the African experience.

The outcome of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) was affected in different ways when the Western gaze turn attention to the 'war on terror'. Mahmoud Mamdani (2014) claimed that external factor was more decisive. "That external factor was the 9/11 and, following it, US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq".⁵¹ Given Sudan's link with Bin Laden

⁴⁶A key example is the 1930 introduction of Closed Districts Ordinances, by which the British executed a 'Southern Policy', effectively separating the Southern provinces from the North in administrative matters. This also opened the South to Christian missionaries while expelling Northern traders whose permits were not renewed. See Johnson, D. 2011. "*The Root Causes*"; Arnold and Le Riche, 2012 "*South Sudan: From revolution to independence*"; Copnall, J. 2014. "*A poisonous Thorn in our hearth*"; and Martell, P. 2018. "*First Raise a Flag*".

⁴⁷OAU Charter, May 25, 1963. Accessed August 29, 2022.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file-oau_charter_1963.pdf

⁴⁸McManee, 2012. "*The first crack in Africa's map? Secession and Self-Determination after South Sudan*". The Brenthurst Foundation. Discussion Paper 2012/01. Accessed August 3, 2022.

<https://www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org/downloads/2012-01-first-crack-in-africa-s-map-brenthurst-paper-.pdf>

⁴⁹In 2016, Brexit engulfed British and European countries into political turmoil over the former's EU exit desires; both Scotland and Spanish Catalan's advanced secessionist referendums. See Griffiths, 2016. "The State of secession in international politics". Accessed June 7, 2022.

https://www.e-ir.info/2016/09/23/the-state-of-secession-in-international-politics/#_ftn2

⁵⁰The Conversation, July 14, 2015. "Africa's border disputes are set to rise – but there are ways to stop them". Accessed July 29, 2022. <https://theconversation.com/africas-border-disputes-are-set-to-rise-but-there-are-ways-to-stop-them-44264>

⁵¹Mamdani, 2014. "South Sudan: No Power-Sharing Without Reform". Accessed July 29,2022.

<https://misr.mak.ac.ug/index.php/news/south-sudan-no-power-sharing-without-reform-by-mahmood-mamdani>

during the 1990s, Sudan came chiefly under intense scrutiny as a target of the West's war on terror.⁵² Awareness of these factors, and how they fit together, explains why Sudan's Bashir and Southern Sudan's SPLA leader John Garang signed the (CPA) on January 9, 2005. The change from articulating 'unity' to focus on 'separation' also had a strong external handling. Milena Sterio (2013:161) contends that, "the great powers were instrumental in ensuring that South Sudan remained a part of Sudan, and then over the last decade, the great powers played a dominant role in paving the South Sudanese way toward independence". Others, contend that both internal and external factors determined the secession of South Sudan.⁵³

Recurring conflicts have had devastating demographic effects too (Mayai,2020). The 1983–2005 strife caused over two million deaths (76% of which were South Sudanese) and the displacement of millions more. The 2013 civil war, resulted in over 400.000 deaths and the displacement of over four million people (Checchi et al, 2018; USAID, 2020).⁵⁴ Ibrahim Elnur, a veteran scholar and commentator of Sudan, recounted that by the time the CPA was signed, "roughly 80% of the population of Southern Sudan were no longer living in their natural habitat" (Elnur,2009:94).⁵⁵ The outcome of the war became the problem of the newly established Government of the Southern Sudan (2005-2011), and from July 9, 2011, the independent Government of South Sudan (GoSS). The transitional period was thus one which prioritised State-building, at the hands of the UN, the US and much of the former combatants now turned politicians. As a result, little attention was given to issues of land and citizenship despite the centrality of matter, especially in the context of post-war reconstruction, which invariably includes the return of IDPs and refugees.⁵⁶

Elnur examined how reconstruction in Sudan was envisioned and the role of the major players in the process, to argue that reconstruction can only be successful if it takes into account the fundamental and irreversible transformations of society engendered by war and conflict. In the case of Sudan/South Sudan, this includes the massive rural to urban population flows that

⁵²USIP, 2004. "Terrorism in the horn of Africa." Accessed July 23, 2022.

<https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr113.pdf>

⁵³Troco, 2018. "Determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa: The case of South Sudan", in *Brazilian Journal of African Studies*, Porto Alegre, v. 3, n. 6, Jul./Dec. 2018, p. 55-74.

⁵⁴To add, Luka Biong Deng (2020:16) argues that ethnic conflicts become a curse only when governance is lacking within a social contract system averse to diversity.

⁵⁵In Uganda, at the height of the war between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army, close to 90% of the Acholi population was displaced and living in more than 150 forced encampments known as 'protected villages', many within a 30-kilometre radius of their home. See Anderson-Gough, A. "Reconstructing Home in Northern Uganda", *Forced Migration Review*, June 2017. <https://www.fmreview.org/shelter/andersongough>

⁵⁶Badyiei, 2014. "The State of Post-conflict Reconstruction"; Leonardi 2020 "Patchwork States".

occurred during the Sudanese civil war.⁵⁷ In its aftermath, urban planning, especially in the capital Juba, became part of the language of constructing a utopian ideal of the South Sudanese State, (Badiey 2013, Badiey and Doll 2018), where the actors responsible for the destruction of the country are now the authorities overseeing its formation through imagining a new nation-state. Historical continuities and patterns have also evolved alongside the war to peace transition, in that, population movements have adapted to changes, and relationships have been forged between diverse groups. Some became extremely violent, such as the cattle raids and fierce land disputes⁵⁸, and some are relatively peaceful, such as intermarriages⁵⁹, or relationships built on sharing grazing land and water sources. Regional markets and trading centres, as well as towns had been important meeting places that furthered the development of relationships between what is assumed ‘centre and periphery’, turning them vital for the viability of the State.⁶⁰

Interference with such relationships emerged during the Anglo-Egyptian condominium administration, with the introduction, in 1930, of a Closed District Ordinance, forbidding Northern merchants from trading in the southern region - which extended to present day Uganda, down to Lake Albert.⁶¹ Historical changes in trade and mobility patterns, profoundly impacted the economy and social development of the Southern region and that of neighbouring populations, and contributed to the political and structural differences found among Sudanese societies, including special administrative and development designs for the Southern region. It also reinforced long-standing binary narratives about ethnicity, language and religion (Jok, 2007; Hutchinson, 1996). South Sudan’s ascension to statehood in 2011, geared from a sense of northern oppression, was met with punishment by the Sudanese government which later banned and threatened northern traders conducting their activities south of the new international border. It is thus that the formation of the South Sudanese State is characterised by the layers of problems, some unresolved and some added onto existing ones. Processes such

⁵⁷Elnur, 2009. *Contested Sudan: The political economy of war and reconstruction*. London: Routledge.

⁵⁸Deng, D. 2014. *South Sudan Country Report Findings of the Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF)*. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ar/756521504872888898/pdf/119635-WP-P095390-PUBLIC-7-9-2017-10-34-1-SouthSudanCountryReport.pdf>

⁵⁹Naomi Pendle (2017) describes how British attempts to divide Bul Nuer and Dinka through the former’s forced resettlement was met with great resistance, and “inter-marriage made fictional any clear division and the government’s attempt to create a no-man’s land failed.” 2017, p11.

⁶⁰For an example of Amieith market, see Rolandsen, 2019. *Trade, peace-building and hybrid governance in the Sudan-South Sudan borderlands*.

⁶¹Henderson, K. D. *Sudan Republic*. London. 1965, pp. 162-63; Meagher, 1990. *The Hidden Economy: Informal and Parallel Trade in Northwestern Uganda*; Leonardi and Santschi, 2016. *Dividing Communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda*.

as these, bear some similarity to the ones in Europe, analysed by Charles Tilly (1990) as examples of violent State-making. Though as late comers in this enterprise, African States had mostly an incomplete control of their peripheries (AUBP,2013), while claims to sovereignty have often led to the violent potential of both the State and its opposing forces. By following this view, it is possible to see how Sudan's division, and later, South Sudan's internal divisions, appeals to the notion of 'war as the midwife of the State', so ingrained in European experience. Situated during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Europe's State-building process has been marked by the desire to accumulate capital, hence academic studies centred around answering a) why states form, b) what type of states form and why, and c) what determines what they do (Acemoglu,2012, Herbst,2000, Tilly,1975,1985,1990). The idea of emphasising the State as a provider of security, services and representation continues to generate theoretical scrutiny, since the examples of Eritrea, Kosovo, Timor Leste and South Sudan have forced a reckoning on the international community with regards to intervention during and following war to peace transitions.⁶²

Political institutions that in the European experience, established the creation of trade-offs in exchange for protection (Olson,1993; North,1981) had been critiqued for excluding self-governing polities, and except for historical macro-social accounts (Tilly,1985,1990; Ayooob 2007), they often overshadow the impact of economic and military technologies on the overall process of State formation, and on the institutions upon which non-state actors may coordinate with one another. Charles Tilly's 'war makes the state and the state makes war' dictum, nevertheless, remains a standard reference in the social and political sciences, even where its contextual analysis does not apply. Academic explorations of how changes in the international economy, technologies of violence and the norm of sovereignty have suggested that "war in the contemporary world tends to trigger the dismantling and even the criminalisation of the state administrative structures" (Leander,2004:74).⁶³ By contrast, two additional strands of research questioned the simple antithesis between violent conflict and State weakness: One uses insights from Tilly, putting violence at the centre of State-making logics and processes (North et al 2013) to explore ways in which particular forms of violence ground political order, and second, to investigate how institutions change and adapt to political crisis (Di John, 2010;

⁶²Felix da Costa and Mateja, 2017. *UN support in the formation of new states*. Accessed July 30, 2022. https://researchrepository.standrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/15843/Peter_2017_UNPeacekeeping_Chapter_AAAM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁶³Viewpoints from which Bayart et al. (1997) and Chabal and Daloz, (1999) also come to influence.

Giustozzi,2011; Putzel and Di John, 2009). This has problematised a connection between violence and institutional forms and innovations often associated with the State. Moreover, the link between the taxation of informal enterprises and improved governance has been seen by the World Bank as one of the ‘big ideas’ in the contemporary literature on taxation and development (Keen,2012:14-15 cited in Meagher, 2018:1). It has shifted debates about the role of the informal economy from State failure to State-building and offers new insights into the role of taxation in contemporary development processes.⁶⁴ However, when faced with a situation where institutional changes and adaptations affect mobile and transnational communities, academic explorations remain few and scattered.⁶⁵ These and other considerations have turned the debates on ‘war and state-making’ into ‘mobility and State-making’. Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran argue for a broad theoretical approach to human mobility whereby States have historically used tactics such as ‘prevention’ or ‘promotion’ of mobility in order to achieve desired State goals.⁶⁶ While Tilly would argue that the imperatives of war have played a key role in incentivising activities such as promotion, there is room to question whether war should always be placed ahead of mobility in these processes, since mobility tends to be a precondition for the conduct of war (ibid 2015:14). As the volume argues, ‘Mobility Makes States’.

Accounting for mobility and State-making practices in Africa has not received enough theoretical thinking. For one, logistical problems have hindered data on mobility, costs and access, and scholars still wonder what compels actual movement within and between African States (Quirk and Vigneswaran,2015; Hammar,2014). Given the status of the human and financial costs of population displacement, it is vital to understand its underlying drivers, benefits (to whom?), and political significance. This goes to the heart of contemporary policy debates about human mobility and displacement, and migration more generally, that tends to see the movement of displaced people primarily as a security threat, rather than a ‘public good’. Examples can be found through the EU policy migration towards Africa, the attempt of many African countries to emulate migration policies affecting inter-African migration, to vicious

⁶⁴Meagher, 2018. “*Taxing Times*”.

⁶⁵A key contribution to advance the analysis of centre-periphery dynamics in State-making comes from Paul Nugent, 2019, “*Boundaries, Communities and State-making in West Africa*”. In what could have been different fates for British and French Togoland, or some form of Senegambian integration, had the “net result that four independent states emerged within the same boundaries that had existed since 1919” (2019:330).

⁶⁶Quirk and Vigneswaran (eds) Chapter 1, “*Mobility Makes States*, pp 1-34.

border disputes such as the Eritrea-Ethiopian stand-off affecting cross border traders.⁶⁷ Processes of State-making associated with the containment and prevention of migration have also increased the urge among leaders of newly established States to assert national sovereignty by introducing immigration restrictions, border control, and to portray immigrants as a threat to their newfound sovereignty, security and ethnic homogeneity or stability in a bid to rally political support. Adepoju (2001) for instance, counted 23 mass expulsions of migrants conducted by 16 different African states between 1958 and 1996.⁶⁸ In the Sahel and Sahara regions, having remained a peripheral area of interest in the scholarly community (Walther and Retaillé, 2017), the challenges faced by mobile communities in processes of State-making have focused on the fissures between mobility and forced sedentarism (Rossi, 2015; Roitman, 2004).

2.3. A brief note on State-making in the African experience

The African continent has been united by the shared experience of European colonisation as early as the mid-15th century, though more systematically from the 1880s.⁶⁹ The Berlin Conference of 1885 marked the contemporary scramble for African soil⁷⁰, with the aim of “ensuring the continuation of the traditional free-trading system on its coasts and its great rivers”.⁷¹ Among many explanations for the European conquest of Africa, the classic argument sees colonialism as the result of bourgeois capitalist competition in the search for new markets⁷²; another line of thinking argues that the object was national aggrandisement in a less competitive setting than 19th century Europe in order to divert the working classes’ aspirations from revolution at home to colonial conquest abroad.⁷³

In comparative discussions on State-making, political scientists and historians often underline that African States – and their borders - emerged as a consequence of colonialism, more than as a result of any organic process of State-building.⁷⁴ According to this view, in some areas

⁶⁷Reuters, December 28, 2018. “Eritrea closes border crossings to Ethiopians”. Accessed July 23, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-eritrea-idUSKCN1OR189>

⁶⁸Adepoju, A., 2001. *Regional integration, continuity and changing patterns of intra-regional migration in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

⁶⁹Wesseling, H., 1991. *Divide and rule: the partition of Africa 1880 – 1914*.

⁷⁰Foster et al, 1988. *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884-1885 and the Onset of Partition*. Oxford University Press for the German Historical Institute in London.

⁷¹Brunschwig, H., 1971. *Le Partage de l’Afrique noire*. Paris: Flammarion, 1971, p. 51, quoted in Hargreaves, John D., “The Making of the Boundaries: Focus on West Africa”, in Asiwaju, A. I. (ed.) *Partitioned Africans*. London: Hurst, 1985, p. 20.

⁷²Hobson, J. A., 2005. *Imperialism: A Study*. New York.

⁷³Doyle, M., 1986. *Empires*, p 146.

⁷⁴Duala-M’bedy (1984:10) for example, asserted that the European concept of State has had a strong influence on African countries to the point where its acceptance led to drawing up of arbitrary borders throughout Africa.

territories were vast, sparsely populated and the centre had problems reaching out to the peripheries. Groups were engaged in shifting forms of cultivation, with little investment in any particular place, making it easy for them to shift to the peripheral areas of other political units. The independence drive spread democratic ideals throughout continental Africa, though many have employed strong measures to forge national unity which were, according to Alan Dowty (1986) “a continuation of methods used by colonial authorities, including expulsions”. Although several African States guaranteed the right of emigration constitutionally, this has been undermined by assumption of discretionary authority either in theory or in practice.⁷⁵ As a result, tight restriction on movement has spread only to a few African countries. Somalia since the 1969 Siad Barre takeover; Ethiopia since the 1974 deposition of Haile Selassie; Mozambique and Angola since independence in 1975. These same States account for a good share of the continent's refugees. In Ethiopia, Eritreans and Somalis have fled amid a civil war.⁷⁶ Colonial administrations agreed on borders that were arbitrary and contained territories that in many cases were larger than what pre-colonial States could control. But at the same time the African wars of State-making came to be fought within the territories, between the State and peripheral opponents, testifying to the State's failure in consolidating authority over its territory and people.

Given this situation, there is a consensus among some scholars, that the quest for statehood in Africa did not lead to many wars over territory. Rather, wars were often fought to capture people, not land.⁷⁷ Equating States with control of territory is therefore too narrow a framework for understanding the African State. State-making processes and conflicts in the region have, theoretically, uncertain effects of population mobility, which are as yet poorly understood. To rival European definition of statehood based on territory, the relative survival of local political authority and social interaction among groups throughout Africa, include a wide range of ethno-linguistic groups split across two and sometimes three colonial borders (Adefuye,1985; Asiwaju,1985). It is reasonable then to conclude that to date, little systematic attention has been paid to the significance of displacement within and for economic domains at both micro and macro levels (Hammar,2014). The advent of State-making initiated during the nationalist

⁷⁵For a general view, see Lukongwa Binaisa, “English-speaking Africa”, pp 431-7 in Vasak and Liskofsk, 1976 (eds). *The Right to Leave and to Return*. New York.

⁷⁶Dowty, 1986. “*Emigration and expulsion in the Third World*.” *Third World Quarterly*, 8:1, 151-176. Accessed July 4, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598608419893>

⁷⁷Mbembe, 2018. “The idea of a borderless world”, in *Africa is a Country*. As he argued, the aim had been to exploit them directly as labour power or as a commodity in the slave trade. Accessed August 12, 2022. <https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world>

and independence movements of the 1960s, was also marked by increased denationalisation and mass expulsions of citizens and non-national citizens in several newly independent countries.⁷⁸ These dislocations across borders, along with stripping off citizenship, nationality and working rights, would soon emerge as the cyclical internal displacement and refugee crises that the democratisation processes helped unleash.⁷⁹ While the scale and frequency of displacement may never be fully known or accounted for, its relationship with State-making cannot be denied.

2.4. South(ern) Sudan's transition

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) caused immense destruction to the region and it triggered mass displacement, which in itself, as argued by Johnson, was employed as a strategy by both sides for their own gains, as “the government and the southern movements have organized forcible relocations of displaced populations at different times in the war” (Johnson,2003:145). For the SPLA and its political wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), displacing people into concentration camps was tactical to attract relief aid while providing a pool of potential recruits. This then gave the Sudanese government reasons to send its troops and allies to attack southern populations in an attempt to deprive the SPLM/SPLA of its support base – concentrated in the Equatorial region - and to cut off supplies by destroying the subsistence economy of southern farmers (Johnson,2003). As a reaction to all this, the population began to devise their own tactics of survival: to be on the move became the safest option and thousands of people left their homes, either to stay in SPLA-controlled areas or in garrison towns in the South that remained under the control of government troops. When the war ended, with both parties signing the CPA agreement in 2005, the task of returning thousands of displaced Southern Sudanese represented both an opportunity for the new semi-autonomous government of southern Sudan to garner support, and a challenge to accommodate returning refugees viewed as ‘outsiders’ (Badiy,2014). The CPA's most central question sought to resolve the land issue in its wealth sharing protocol, something it never achieved. Rather, the question of nationality, citizenship and belonging stood in the way of rights and freedom of movement, enhanced by a deep sense of mistrust southerners were fed

⁷⁸In 1989, the government of Mauritania rescinded the nationality of 75,000 black Mauritians (Parker,1991), while Ethiopia did the same against ethnic Eritreans, who later reciprocated. Human Rights Watch, 2003. “*Mass expulsions and the nationality issue*”. Accessed July 9, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/01/29/horn-africa-war/mass-expulsions-and-nationality-issue>

⁷⁹National constitutions implemented by leaders during this period turned long-term non-national residents as well as residents into refugees, while nomadic pastoralists became stateless.

on by their leaders during the referendum of January 9, 2005.⁸⁰ When South Sudan later declared independence in 2011, the Sudanese government amended the 1994 Nationality Act to strip the nationality of thousands of people because their fathers are of South Sudanese origin, even if their mothers are Sudanese, while also revoking the citizenship of Sudanese born in the south who had settled in the North for decades, with few ties to South Sudan.⁸¹ In line with its neighbour, South Sudan adopted an interpretation of nationality based on ethnicity and patriarchy – where the father needs to be a son of the soil - effectively stripping northerners in the south of their citizenship.

Francis Deng has written that for South Sudan, a great challenge to governance lies in the “ethnic diversity and competitiveness at various levels of the segmentary lineage system that is characteristic of the indigenous social and political order” (2015:101). In whichever ways the government seeks to demonstrate its sovereignty - such as deciding who belongs and who does not - complaints of discrimination against some groups and preference for others emerges (Johnson,2013; Kindersley,2015). The movement of people also has its inevitable counterpart in the arms trade within the region.⁸² This leads to broader issues of cross-border interactions and spill-over effects that make many localised conflicts mutate to transnational, and international conflicts.⁸³ They might help us understand the region as a set of complex and interlinked micro-conflicts, each with residual socio-economic impacts on one another. The sources of border disputes in the wider African region are identified in the improper delimitation and poorly demarcated colonial borders, incomplete lack of border administration and management and in many ways, the discoveries of mineral wealth in borderland areas (Okumu,2010). The Kenya-Tanzania-Uganda-Rwanda borders in part, reflect the British obsession with controlling the source of the Nile and the colonial intrigues to gain access to the mineral wealth in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁸⁴

⁸⁰Schomerus and de Vries, 2017. *Fettered Self-determination: South Sudan's narrowed path to secession*.

⁸¹Sudan tribune, 2018. “*Sudan's parliament reinstates nationality to people of South Sudanese origin*”. Accessed June 30, 2022. <https://sudantribune.com/article63768/>

⁸²Amnesty International, April 2020. “*South Sudan: Evidence of violations and concealment of arms*”. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/south-sudan-evidence-of-violations-and-illicit-concealment-of-arms-must-spur-un-to-renew-arms-embargo/>

⁸³On August 16, 2016, some 800 to 900 troops from SPLA Division VI launched an incursion into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, crossing the border and engaging in a battle with SPLM/A in Opposition. On 17 August, two MI-24 helicopters also crossed the border, travelling nearly 6 km into Congolese territory and again attacking SPLM/A in Opposition positions. UNSC, Nov. 15, 2016, p3.

⁸⁴AUBP 2014, p15.

And as new conditions emerge from displacement, shaped by new technologies and new rationalities i.e., border management regimes - they equally necessitate new options. As Foucault (1979) posited, modern power has been concerned with systematically transforming the conditions in which life as a whole is organised. To what concerns the link between power and mobility in Africa (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015), the question turns to what kind of cross border network system can help make sense of the situation in many African regions? Seen from the perspective of both Political Economy and Anthropology lenses, the situation is most generally characterised by contradictory processes such as peacebuilding and State-making, to include State-making strategies that interact with (forced) population movement. In effect, the dynamic interrelationships of borderland communities, their external and internal circumstances that may produce peaceful relationships as well as violent ones, has offered new grounds for research⁸⁵, to understand also, the complex geographical distribution of groups.⁸⁶ We can then form a better idea of how such links affect the boundaries between groups, making them fluid rather than fixed, and how these groups might not coincide with the boundaries of ethnic groups or even today's economic zones.

There is a need to understand how the development of contemporary States is part of wider processes, and how local effects of State-making create complications. For instance, how national boundaries interfere with existing historical links between groups (Leonardi and Santschi,2016; Leonardi,2020), how problems between groups on the borders become nation-state problems, and how increased market dependency (Thomas,2019,2020) can shape the adaptive responses of groups. Innovative processes such as smuggling have already been identified and documented (Meagher,2018; Wakenge, Dijkzeul and Vlassenroot,2018) as important strategies for people living in the borderland. There is also the arming of the State and of local groups, who often escalate existing problems, in particular, cattle raid cases.⁸⁷ Rather, seeing boundaries as part of dynamic processes within different contexts of systemic interdependencies and management seems to be closer to reality. There is a need also to move

⁸⁵ Leonardi (2020) for example, explains how, despite recent tensions over borderland demarcation, the Kuku and Ma'di themselves had a long history of peaceful relations, intermarriage, trade and common farming livelihoods in the green hills above the west bank of the Nile.

⁸⁶As in the movement of the Nilotes, Bantus and Cushitic people around the region. Coping with drought or shifting between agriculture and pastoralism, have been not only adaptive processes, but have also been characterised by shifts in identities (as Nilotes becoming Bantus).

⁸⁷These Inter/Intra-clan conflicts often overlap with conflicts over resources. They are mapped and expected to continue along these fault lines, and include the Bul Nuer who compete with the Twic, Rek, and Ruweng Dinka, within Bul Nuer sub-clans, and with the Leek, Jagey, and Adok Nuer, the Malual Dinka/Riziegat/Missiriya border conflicts, and Gogrial East/West conflicts. Craze and CSRF, 2018.

beyond a type of perspective based on arguments of “incomplete transition”⁸⁸, to rather, recognise these processes as happening along a “mobility-enclosure continuum” (Cunningham and Heyman 2004), where battles of many social and political forces are represented in the region; some local in character, others regional, national, and international. For one, research on African migration has become more inquisitive of old narratives that suggest and recycle news on migration out of the continent. In 2018, research conducted by AMMODI on 9 African countries shows that the vast majority of respondents would not only opt to migrate within the region first, and second, to elsewhere within the continent, rather than leaving Africa altogether.⁸⁹

2.5. A view from the Border

As the depth in research on African borders received greater attention from the 1990s⁹⁰, with few papers prior to that period (Nugent and Asiwaju,1996), the collective study of African borders now spans a vast number of subjects. Mostly, they include issues of sovereignty (Mbembe,2002, 2018), migrant workers (Tornimbeni,2005), cross-border trade (Meagher 1990,2003), conflict (Zeller,2007,2015), and with the interference of traditional authorities (Leonardi,2013,2016).⁹¹ All of these make questions about war and peace in Africa, equally about borders. Borders inherited by the colonial powers might have been arbitrary, but even in the contemporary context, they remain far from meaningless. The negative developments in terms of border-relations in a number of African countries highlight anew the relevance of the border question and the measures taken to address it by the African Union. This dangerous development is on the rise, especially in resource-based border disputes (AUBP 2013; Okumu,2010; Leonardi,2020). In 2011, the year South Sudan ascended as an independent State, approximately only one third of African land boundaries was demarcated.⁹² Other boundaries had been demarcated according to river courses, imprecise, or outdated boundary-marking techniques. Sometimes, boundary commission officials demarcated borders following local tracks or marking trees. As a result, most Africa’s current borders, even where there is no territorial dispute, cannot be considered to be demarcated. Among the many borders that remain

⁸⁸See Cormack, Z. 2016. “*Borders are Galaxies*”.

⁸⁹See AMMODI <https://ammodi.com/2018/06/25/african-migration-whos-thinking-of-going-where/>

⁹⁰Despite the vast literature and historical analysis on issues raised by African borders, scholars interested on borders in Africa mostly emerged in the 1990s, in particular after the conference “Borders and Borderline Zones in Africa” in Edinburgh in 1993.

⁹¹For a comprehensive overview, see Rodrigues and Tomás (eds) 2012, “Crossing African Borders- Migration and Mobility”.

⁹²According to a survey conducted by the AUBP (2013:6).

disputed (Asiwaju,2012; AUBP, 2013:15), are those between Sudan–South Sudan, characterised by ongoing disputes over the border town of Abyei (Johnson, 2010; Craze,2013). According to Andrew Natsios (2015:419), former US special envoy to Sudan, “the exact demarcation of what is now heavily militarised border had not been agreed on by the two countries and will continue to be a source of considerable tension”.⁹³ Though the 2,010 km long Sudan-South Sudan border receives much attention, in response to a much longer history of such tensions, the 435 km border between South Sudan and Uganda has hardly enjoyed academic exploration until recent years, punctuated for most of its post-colonial period.⁹⁴

This is partly due to African rulers having ignored their own pre-colonial history in the name of modernity, or as a tactical move to control and win over opponents. By doing so, they also defined what options were available to them in their own national State-making process.⁹⁵ Economically, aid has played a role in helping regimes that could not tax their own population, as is the case in South Sudan.⁹⁶ And as they could not collect taxes, exploitation through indirect taxes, such as tariffs and export duties, as well as exploitation of mineral resources and corruption, was important. This turning point in the modern history of African war and State-making gave rise to the study of war economies (Keen 1998, Nordstrom 2001) which created the mantra that war can be more profitable than making peace, as it creates ‘states of exception’, according to Agamben (1998).⁹⁷ The margins then, are also where a sense of disorder is integrated into the body of the States through the state of exception and internalised by the central State through practices of civil war. As the taming of border areas are key to a contemporary State’s power, they become also a challenge to the centre itself. South Sudan’s decentralisation process embodies these challenges, both in being incapable of legitimising central power, and in trying to increase the number of internal states in an exercise of power redistribution.⁹⁸ President Salva Kiir’s executive order, on October 2, 2015, increased the country’s existing 10 states to 28, in an arrangement that follows ethnic boundaries, and

⁹³Cited in Deng and Logan 2018, pp28. See also Vaughan et al. 2013 “*The borderlands of South Sudan*”; Copnall, 2014. “*A poisonous torn in our hearts*”, p 221–3. Heglig, also known as Panthou in South Sudan, is another disputed border town that became the cause of military confrontations between the two countries in 2012 (Johnson 2012; Justin and de Vries 2019). The Ilemi triangle – the borders between South Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia, also remain contested as of 2019. See Winter, P. 2019. “A border too far”. Downloaded from: <https://dro.dur.ac.uk/29953/1/29953.pdf>

⁹⁴As an example, Meagher (1990) explored the cross-border trade in the triple borderland addressed in this thesis.

⁹⁵In the case of South Sudan, such decisions lie in the hands of the president, who rules by decree.

⁹⁶Craze, J. and CSRF, 2018. “Displacement, Access and conflict in South Sudan”.

⁹⁷Empirically, there has been systematic types of relationships between centre and periphery. And conceptually, a pattern emerge that can be linked to processes of “inclusionary exclusion” (Hagman and Korf 2012).

⁹⁸Radio Tamazuj, 2015a. “Kiir and Makuei Want 28 States in South Sudan.”

methodically isolates communities, mainly in the Upper Nile region. It was followed by a second decree in January 2017, which brought the total number to 32. The state of exception becomes rather, the way such (disorderly) areas are being governed in present time.⁹⁹

It is hard to imagine a Western-type State, with a neutral Weberian-like bureaucracy, and nationalism built on imagined communities (Anderson, 1983). Nor is it possible to reduce the exercise of boundary-making and re-making, with the exclusion of certain groups, to simple dichotomies like “modern-traditional,” “developed-underdeveloped.” A strict boundary between State and society is also difficult to maintain and may prove even more challenging in borderland regions. The types of States that emerged are based on coercion and on State autonomy, in the sense that the State is a foreign imposition often in tension with the traditional structures over which it seeks to dominate. More often, it finds itself unable to control local-level social relations. Asiwaju’s influence in the studies of borderlands and communities, asked what kind of transborder governance should be in place (if any) and what kind of attention should communities sharing a border get? (1986:247). This implies that other groups in a society who exercise judicial and administrative powers at the most local level, have the means to contest and resist the centre in many aspects. A State breakdown is thus not necessarily a total institutional collapse. Rather, it is the collapse of the ability of elites dominating the State to dominate competing groups.¹⁰⁰

2.5.1. Territory, Sovereignty and Borderlands

One of the most confusing acts of a colonial enterprise in central Africa is King Leopold’s Lado Enclave – today mostly in Uganda’s West Nile region, where research for this thesis takes place (Chapter 4.3). As the current borderland situation receives analytical attention, the focus is on the activities and dynamics at the margins between Uganda’s West Nile, South Sudan and Eastern DRC, although, without losing sight of the centre.¹⁰¹ The historical reality of borderlands has changed the spatial articulation of politics and economy, as capital compels the State to operate and protect its interests. African leaders, as much as leaders in more

⁹⁹In the case of Bar-al-Ghazal, Nicky Kindersley (2017) investigates local chiefs inhabiting the borders with southern Darfur, managed through cycles of war and famine, to exert power and negotiate with multiple actors.

¹⁰⁰As Vlassenroot (2008:2) discussed in the case of DRC, an absent State does not mean a governance void, but the opening of space for other actors, “including traditional chiefs, civil society groups, churches and aid agencies, to assume services previously delivered by the State.”

¹⁰¹Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013; Schomerus and Titeca 2012. Various examples emerged on the issue of border demarcation: New Vision, Uganda, 26 October 2011. “South Sudan Accuses Uganda of Moving International Border”; Wudu (2012) in Gurtong, 9 January 2012. “South Sudan–Uganda Border Dispute is Threatening”.

advanced capitalist societies, can identify power with the extent of their command over resources and consider territorial acquisitions as “a means and a by-product of the accumulation of capital” (Arrighi,1994:33). South Sudan’s sub-division of states is a clear example that the notion of territorial control - strategically important during the period of colonialism- is only of tactical importance to the centre.

The violence used to achieve certain goals, often takes over where power is not defined, as in the borderland areas. Through based on new socio-political organisations built around such areas, violence and war prove very creative forces and it helps transform the participants. Instead of the State conquering rebels and restoring “order,” we see the emergence of a State in South Sudan that contains both the Weberian elements based on hierarchy, and the more decentralised elements that resonate with rebel groups. Violent action is said to be necessary, either to seek justice, or to avenge government retaliation and vice-versa, which brings the nation-state into phases of collapse and new sovereignties into being, as in the case of the ethnic Dinka, followed by the Nuer of South Sudan, with very problematic consequences. South Sudan provides a weak State scenario, in which the international community intervenes all the time. And in the face of mass displacement, where millions of South Sudanese find themselves nearby the borderlands of their country with another one, the lack of meaningful recourse remains unsustainably high. The UNDP (2021) has identified the absence of any dedicated borderland programming at a regional level as a critical gap in developmental policy and practice.¹⁰² This is significant when we come to think about the displacement situation (and not only in South Sudan) and its value to understanding State-making from the margins. In this case, it is worth asking whether the rise in subnational conflicts may be linked to changes in South Sudan’s political economy. Amid the complex and sometimes idiosyncratic conflict dynamics, an overall direction indicates that elite power is being transferred away from Juba and into the peripheries. This represents a reversal from most elite trajectories prior to the recent civil war, where access to oil wealth and power concentrated in the capital. Rather, many elites have revised their ambitions downwards, and currently concentrate their activities in their home areas (ACLEDD 2020).

2.6. Displacement and forms of Mobilities

¹⁰² UNDP, 2020. *Africa Borderland Centre*. <https://www.undp.org/africa/africa-borderlands-centre>

Displacement as a lived experience also forges new subjectivities, in particular as the condition becomes “normalised” in protracted conditions, and thus stops being a crisis, to become a context – and different contexts attract more interest and political will and hence funding, than others.¹⁰³ At the policy level, displacement has become a structuring idiom within which action and responses unfold, and local people take part in the process of the production of what outsiders view as temporary crises. African border regions are characterised by high levels of mobility as a result of migrant labour systems, resettlement and flight from taxation and labour demands, and more recently, as a result of substantial refugee flows.¹⁰⁴ Along a continuum, where borders have both territorial as well as human consequences, the concept of mobility has evolved, though its understanding can be problematic. A more useful approach sees mobility as a process, since the concept has been worked and re-worked in different disciplines, and the various understandings of what the concept entails have been the base of conflicts and the definition of the political field itself.¹⁰⁵ South Sudan – and the wider Horn region – fits these variations, where analyses are conventionally directed at nomadic people, and their mobile livelihood systems constitute an important part of society. On the other hand, modern communication technologies– such as the use of mobile phones¹⁰⁶ - enables the territorial extension of interactions, where the “movements of people and animals, capital, goods and information entail benefits, but there are also damages associated with mobility, such as increased insecurity” (Gertel et al. 2014:9).

The disruption of livelihood systems affects both historically mobile and the more settled groups in South Sudan’s diverse societies, and in the post-independence period, this has also involved the shifting of internal boundaries, rendering not only people and their livestock, but the State itself, fluid. Mobility encompasses both social economic advance and of actual physical movement, transcending a territory and vis-à-vis units outside of the territory. Hence, the concept is closely linked to the historical emergence of the nation-state (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015). Others, identify a weakness in this conception, in that it reduces borders

¹⁰³The Guardian, 2017. “*When your crisis isn’t cool enough to attract the right people*”. March 27, 2017. Accessed September 22, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/mar/21/secret-aid-worker-when-your-crisis-isnt-cool-enough-to-attract-the-right-people>

¹⁰⁴As in reports by IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2017b, 2018, 2020.

¹⁰⁵A pioneer in the study of mobility, John Urry’s “*Mobilities*” (2007) frames the concept as a key characteristic of modernity; Tim Cresswell, in “*Towards a Politics of Mobility*” (2010) contends that mobility can be thought of an entanglement between movement, representation, and practice.

¹⁰⁶Robinson, 2017. “*Phone technology gives refugees in Uganda cash lifeline*”. UNHCR. Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2017/10/59e07fe24/phone-technology-gives-refugees-uganda-cash-lifeline.html>

to the implementation of restrictions to movement and towards a constant refinement of an ideal end.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, since the end of the transitional period (2005-2011), land commissions had not been established to resolve land rights, which compound relationships between semi-settled groups and pastoralists. What then, is the logic of State-making in cases where sedentary people are chased out, to give way to nomadic groups who unusually defy the very meaning of State-making processes based on territory?¹⁰⁸

Pritchard and Verjee (2021) argued that the dramatic redivision of territory in the midst of protracted violence and large-scale displacement had a significant impact on representation, as well as social, economic, and political relations throughout South Sudan. A survey conducted in 2018 by South Sudanese civil society forum (SSCSF) found that 75% of respondents did not support the creation of the 32 states in January 2017.¹⁰⁹ Both the 2015 and 2017 changes to administrative boundaries already proved unlikely to address widespread competition over political and economic resources that had been reduced to and expressed as exclusive ethno-territorial boundary disputes between historically interdependent ethnic and sub-ethnic communities.¹¹⁰

2.7. The challenge of local ethnic conflicts

To add, the country's political economy is heavily militarised in spite of the arms embargo. Resource extraction and distribution often occur through the security sector, which gives military elites ample opportunity to profit from the war economy, while ordinary citizens can join State militias to access government patronage. Informal civilian militias, maintained during times of both war and relative peace, enhance the regime's ability to reach into rural and remote areas of the country through the security sector. These security structures are built into the fabric of local government and contribute to the melding of the State with the ruling regime and the military.

South Sudan experienced increasing violence in the wake of the 2018 R-ARCSS, though most of it not directly connected to the civil war. The problems and the challenges also come from

¹⁰⁷Pritchard and Verjee 2021. *"From 10 states to 32 states and back"*.

¹⁰⁸As for example, Benedetta Rossi (2015) examined how nomadic Tuareg in, resisted State control by designing alternatives and antagonistic notions of power over mobility, which she calls "kinetocracy".

¹⁰⁹South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF), November 27, 2018. "Revitalizing peace in South Sudan". Downloaded from <https://www.csr-southsudan.org/repository/revitalizing-peace-in-south-sudan-citizen-perceptions-of-the-peace-process/>

¹¹⁰For a detailed case, see Pritchard, 2020 "Fluid states and rigid boundaries".

the margins of the State, with the loss of control by the centre of particular territories at the margins and paralleled also by a loss of control and monopoly of access to weapons, and thus violence. Civil wars and warlords represent the use of organised violence for political ends, the mixing of violence and crime for private aims, and also the violation of human rights by systematically attacking civilians ¹¹¹, which have all contributed to humanitarian emergencies that call for interventions, turning zones of emergencies into zones of exception and exclusion.¹¹² Power holders, including State actors, use violence to rid themselves of problems. Although wars and violence can be explained with reference to ethnicity and gender, i.e. cultural factors, they must also be taken as a language with which other things, economic, material and political, are being addressed. Ethnicity is a relational concept that, although imagined, it is real in terms of mobilising individual people on the basis of a history of common origin, taken to be true. Civilians are targeted because the aim is to clear areas of people who ‘do not belong’. Evidence of the clearing of entire areas in parts of South Sudan have been consistently documented, where the strategy is used to control key resources.

The militarisation of local and regional elites engaged in mutual predatory action, has been the focus of literature that explains how the local population is made to suffer (Wild et. al, 2018). The failure of political elites has eroded confidence in politics, making people inclined to listen to alternatives that promise quick fixes. The emergence of new markets that put weapons within reach of private people, and of smuggling, which became an important form of trade, allows elite groups to rein in the new economy and politics.¹¹³

2.8. State and non-state armed actors

Both Sudanese civil wars saw the intense intra-Sudanese fighting between government soldiers, rebel armies and militias, with external interference. Uganda’s rebel LRA and the country’s army, the Uganda People’s Defence Force, have been active on both sides of the border since the 1980s. In a perfect proxy war, the Ugandan government supported the rebel SPLA soldiers (Schomerus,2012), while in turn the government of Sudan delivered weapons and supplies to the LRA. A number of other rebel groups were part of these “regional conflict

¹¹¹By which UN reports for the special commission in South Sudan 2016, 2017 provide detailed and graphic accounts.

¹¹²The “new wars” theory (Kaldor 1998; Duffield 2002) characterises such conflicts as often about identity politics, where the quest for power is couched in terms of exclusion and inclusion of people in various groups.

¹¹³One may identify MacGaffey (1991, 2001), Meagher (1990) and Roitman’s (2004) work as formulations of the emerging political economy of the African post-Cold War period.

formations” as Sudan and Uganda used proxy rebel groups, as Prunier writes, to run “an undeclared war on their common border” (2004: 359). The presence of the Ugandan Army is already controversial and has been criticized by Ethiopia, Sudan, and the US. Riek’s negotiators in Ethiopia have used the presence of the Ugandans as a reason for delaying further talks (Johnson,2014) from early in the current conflict. Meanwhile, the mushrooming of armed groups, militias and so-called local defence groups to astounding numbers, makes armed actors impossible to ignore.¹¹⁴

At the top level, the numbers of military commanders have steadily increased in the recent war, with both the SPLA-IO and government forces performing military promotions. Hundreds of SPLA-IO officers were appointed as Brigadier or Major Generals, while on the government side, the 2019 budget showed a remarkable 20 1st Lieutenant Generals; 103 Lieutenant Generals; 606 Major Generals; and 1,773 Brigadiers across the army, police, and National Security Service (NSS) (GRSS,2019:15). To finance these numbers is simply impossible, given the declining oil revenues and increase reliance on securing loans from commodity traders.¹¹⁵ The problem is that any large-scale demotion of military officers is likely to stir up tensions (ICG 2021). The use of arms as a practical occupation, and the underlying production of violence that accompanies situations of war and non-war, drives investigation about the competing frontiers between war and peace (Debos,2016). The historical raiding practices in the region, brought to contemporary debates of violent modes of accumulation, the notion that the spoils become illegal, but licit forms of wealth (Roitman,2004). The highly organised, yet unregulated network of economic activity in the Central African Republic, decades of economic decline enabled a context in which austerity led to a series of wealth creation activities related to banditry and war, blurring distinctions between licit and illicit. Routinised and largely operated by armed actors in the cross-border regions, transnational flows of goods and services came to defy the labels ascribed to economic informality.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the withdrawal from formal channels by large proportion of the population, can be described as reconstituting the African State's authority through networks emerging from institutional gaps. Such networks are part of the same epistemological grounding as the State, in that the practices of governing in such binary spheres (formal/informal, legal/illegal) help explain how illegal

¹¹⁴Saferworld, February 2017. “*Informal armies*”; Wild et al., 2018, “*The militarization of cattle raiding in South Sudan*”.

¹¹⁵Africa Confidential, August 30, 2019. “*Juba payday loan habit*”. Accessed September 25, 2022.

https://www.africa-confidential.com/article-preview/id/12732/Juba%27s_payday_loan_habit

¹¹⁶ Meagher, 2013; Raeymaekers, 2010; MacGaffey, 1987, 2001.

activities can be interpreted as licit. The transnationality of such architecture is also a key tenet to study how armed actors and political elites gain the necessities to wage war and create peace, and how such services are paid for.¹¹⁷

Networks of accumulation operated by armed actors are fragmented and manifest themselves in different ways across time and space. This is precisely why Twjijstra (2014) noted that “[t]he notion of being illegal or criminal in a global sense is debatable since definitions are contingent upon a rule of law determined by powerful states and intergovernmental organisations whose jurisdiction over these practices is mostly self-proclaimed”.¹¹⁸ This makes the analysis of armed actors and civilians’ relationships (chapter 6), as well as their categorisation, methodologically impossible to distinguish. The nature of many protracted conflicts and the fragmented demographics in conflict zones also serves as an excuse for leaders to target civilian population where coercive tactics do not produce the desired outcome. Illustrative of this is Salva Kiir’s justifying the rampant violence directed at the Greater Equatoria region based on its ‘neutrality’, or the refusal of local communities to fight on the government side.¹¹⁹ In a statement to the UN Human Rights Commission for South Sudan, Yasmin Sooka noted how the Equatorias, relatively unaffected until 2016, became the “epicentre of the conflict”, with intimidation of communities and the use of starvation as part of tactics employed to force them to flee the country.¹²⁰ Through the daily work of armed actors and the meanings and interpretations of violence in State-making processes, the (dis)continuities between war and peace, according to Debos, “allows us to make sense of the contexts in which war is part of the modern day-to-day framework of politics” (2016:4).

Scholarship that explores rebel-civilian interactions through the concept of ‘rebel governance’, challenge a common wisdom based on ideas of a ‘social contract’. Mampilly’s (2007) comparative analysis suggested that the more we know about the relationship between armed actors and civilians during a conflict, the better we can understand the potential for a rebellion to transition from a militaristic organization to one concerned more with governance issues. Examples are many, where armed actors adapt their military strategies into a façade of democracy, with fluidity between their roles as soldiers and State actors.

¹¹⁷Nordstrom, 2004. “*Shadows of War*”.

¹¹⁸Studies of informal economies across African States (Roitman,2005; Meagher ,2010; Raeymaekers,2012). have pointed that these practices do not signify an escape from the State or the formal economy, but instead, they represent an engagement with both.

¹¹⁹See ICG, 2017. *South Sudan and the conflict in the Equatorias*. Accessed October 29, 2022. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/south-sudan/south-sudan-s-south-conflict-equatorias>

¹²⁰UNOHRC, December 14, 2016. “*Statement by Yasmin Sooka*”.

Applied to changes during wartime, institutional structures that facilitate recruitment and provide access to political networks, allow for the accumulation of material resources and put their ideologies in practice by implementing promised reforms, indicating that rebel groups who rely on a particular ethnic, regional or national population face pressure from civilians to provide governance (Arjona et al. 2015; Mampilly, 2007, 2011; Raeymaekers, 2012). Especially when trying to control territory, armed actors are inclined to provide public goods to justify their claims to represent a certain population and thus, demonstrate their strength to the central State. This mode of governance works in the logic of 'governance without a government' (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus and Vlassenroot, 2008), a regulatory mechanism in a sphere of activity which functions effectively in cases also devoid of formal authority. Emblematic of this scenario, Somalia has defied dominant consensus on what a State must do and how it should act towards its constituents, showing that this type of governance can complement the political economy of the State (Roitman, 2005).¹²¹ Yet, there are some who question the extent to which rebel governance offers a long-term alternative to the absence of State-led governance, adding scepticism to the 'war makes state' theory, according to Mampilly.

The absence of institutional capacity, and the oftentimes deliberate underdevelopment of peripheral areas, has paved the way for a security pluralism (de Vries and Schomerus, 2014) in these borderlands. Regionalised conflicts engulf one another in a pattern often neglected and limits the rebel governance concept to inform only part of a bigger dynamic: the cross-border activities of armed groups with fluid loyalties (Debos, 2008, 2016). As Debos' extensive research on Chad shows, the emergence of rebel groups in opposition to the State, and also in opposition to one another, need to be understood as a long process of social interactions and trans-border activities of people who have been historically mobile, and able to shift their loyalty as they see it fit to fulfil their needs. Regionalised conflicts are important to the study of armed groups and State-making processes in countries undergoing war to peace transitions, as they share patterns of armed violence with other forms of violence; political-military relationships which come to influence and shape the everyday organisation and negotiation of access to goods and services; as well as to state power and networks of survival and accumulation (Raeymaekers, 2014a) that transcend both territories; and methods of intervention

¹²¹It suffices to mention that, despite not at war, Belgium has twice been left without a government. See Brussel Times, August 3, 2020. "*Belgium Breaks own Record of Longest Period Without Government.*" Accessed July 7, 2022). <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/124777/belgium-breaks-own-record-for-longest-period-without-government/>

by donors and the international community. Different authors and different academic disciplines have sought to address the regulatory modalities emanating from ‘clandestine’ trade networks vis-à-vis the State in different ways (Meagher,2013; Twijnstra,2014), but all agree that conflict or the withdrawal of the State does not leave a regulatory vacuum. The institutional bricolage of the SPLA-IO in South Sudan's Central Equatoria region, devoid of substantial support, has been identified as relying on local histories of insurgent and extra-state orders (Twijnstra,2014; Twijnstra and Titeca,2016). Fragmented armies or rebellions compete over dominance, the right to taxation and plunder, as well as collaboration with South Sudanese in the towns and camps of northern Uganda (Kindersley and Rolandsen,2017). The latest conflict in South Sudan settled into an established pattern of guerrilla warfare, with rebel units carrying out sporadic ambushes and attacks on passing forces and vehicles, as the government retaliates, with troops attacking, burning and looting rebel villages, where both sides attempt to control population movements (ibid 2017:319). These intra-states conflicts have increasingly pitted armed actors against one another, against civilians and the State, whereby such proliferation attracts powerful men with connections to the military, political and business circles concerned with internal (in) security.¹²²

The military entrepreneurship that developed between elements within the Ugandan army (UPDF) and resource extraction in DRC, has raised questions about whether "these networks of accumulation could be considered as autonomously operating or integrated into the political system, and if and how these networks have transformed the nature of Uganda's State and ruling regime" (Vlassenroot et. al, 2012). It is probable that certain pre-war structures of opportunity have blurred the formal and informal elements described as a 'militarised commercial nexus'¹²³, forged through cross border activities since the 1980s. They form a type of interconnectedness with both public and private, and in between State and non-state actors. Despite its limits to non-western experiences, several conflicts, in particular those prevalent in the Great Lakes region, bear similarity with the violent primitive accumulation associated with processes of State formation (Cramer, 2006; Giustozzi,2011; Raeymaekers,2014a). Thus, the use of arms in everyday practical occupations in so called 'weak States' needs an approach that can better help us understand the activities of armed actors, who rely on both support and displacement tactics

¹²²The Sentry 2016, 2019; ICG 2021. "Toward a viable future".

¹²³Titeca, 2012. *Tycoons and contraband*, p 52-3.

to achieve different goals, sometimes in a continuum of a single process.¹²⁴ An improvement can be found by conciliating these contrasting relationships between armed actors and civilians. As Armed actors pose serious questions about the legitimacy of the State, their relevance defies the most basic attributes of what a legitimate State is, especially in the eyes of civilians. The role of the international community also changed, now less of a supporter of the State, and more of a controller of the same State. The US\$ 14 billion the US had poured into South Sudan to help build the new State, were effectively co-opted into the hands of international experts. In 2015, the economic costs of the new civil war in South Sudan rose to US\$ 158 billion, while the international community disbursed approximately US\$30 billion to peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.¹²⁵

2.9. A framework for studying Displacement as a form of mobility

“Massive displacement of people within countries and across borders has become a defining feature of the post-cold war world.”

Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, 2009

By forging a link between flows of mobility and displacement, a modern way of thinking about how States are (re)shaped and evolve along a continuum, challenges Western notions about hegemonic power around a social contract, whereby people need to be settled to be included as citizens. The power of the State, in his view, is everywhere; in subjects, in institutions, in the knowledge that is produced. When the focus is on a system of practices reconfigured and redeployed by new social forces – and in this case, of ethnic belonging - as Mbembe suggests, it represents a permanent state of exception where sovereignty is the exercise of power outside the law, and “peace is more likely to take on the face of a war without end” (2003:14). Violence could then operate in the name of civilisation¹²⁶, and a new social existence emerges to condition the lives of such citizens to spaces deemed “interwar” (Debos 2016). To South Sudanese, a state of endless war is also the space where profits accrue, through the extraction of resources or the use of privatized militias or through contracts for reconstruction.¹²⁷ For many analysts, population displacement is worth observing but not explaining. This stems from

¹²⁴By which South Sudan is a strong example, with targeted displacement along ethnic lines, abductions, rape, looting, burning of homes and land-grabbing. The redrawing of state boundaries to create 28 states, and later, 32 states, has exacerbated this displacement.

¹²⁵Breckenridge, 2015. “*South Sudan: The costs of War*”. Frontiers Economics.

¹²⁶Although Mbembe refers to the occupation of Palestine, the similarities with other contexts can be drawn.

¹²⁷While the literature covering the extraction of minerals from Eastern Congo is evidently vast, South Sudan’s use of privatised militias needs better attention, as does the Ugandan government and allies dominance in contracts dealing with the reconstruction and development of its northern region.

a common belief that (forced) migration in wartime is somewhat an unavoidable by-product of violence and instability. Northern Uganda, especially in relation to South Sudan, gives us an example of such entanglements between violence, conflict and development, both through the refugee policy and its national development framework (Fox, 2017).¹²⁸

Going further to explore what happens to displaced populations during conflict, ‘Displacement Economies’, the collection edited by Amanda Hammar (2014), notes the scarcity of conceptual work on the economic lives of displaced populations. Asking thus, what does displacement generates in terms of economies, the authors share that while displacement dismantles people’s existing capital and networks, a range of new socio-economic relationships, spaces and creative strategies also emerge through experiences of dislocation. As human displacement occurs in different contexts, this perspective helps researchers move the focus away from one fixed on specific regions, where States are unable to or uninterested in helping, and an international community and humanitarian system attempting to help but finding obstacles in corruption and institutional weaknesses (Fassin and Gome, 2012). These discussions are also part of a broader field of processes in South Sudan which connects the humanitarian industry- or external interveners- to issues of local employment (Craze, 2021). The scale of displacement and contention over land since the beginning of the civil war implies that deciding who is ‘local’ also means intervening in tough political issues, which aid agencies often neglect.¹²⁹ The displacement situation in South Sudan is colossal nonetheless, and the establishment of the independent State of South Sudan did not solve these pre-existing problems, but turned them more central to the problems South Sudan and its citizens face through the sub-division of internal states, and the region has not developed in positive ways. These known facts make the conceptual advance of a *multi-site living* (Chapter 4 and 5) more robust: through continuous displacement and inability to secure jobs through formal channels, South Sudanese derive from their own pre-existing experiences in conflict-related displacement and use their networks across borders to access South Sudan, while they forge a more permanent presence in Uganda.

¹²⁸The Guardian, August 20, 2016. *Is Uganda the best place to be a refugee?* Accessed October 22, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/aug/20/is-uganda-the-best-place-to-be-a-refugee> ; Fox, 2017. *What South Sudan’s War means for northern Uganda’s relative peace*. Accessed October 16, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/what-south-sudan-s-war-means-for-northern-uganda-s-relative-peace/>

¹²⁹Craze, 2021. “NGO hiring practices spark protests in South Sudan”, in *The New Humanitarian*. Accessed July 19, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2021/12/7/NGO-hiring-practices-spark-protests-South-Sudan>

South Sudan's new historical reality plays out in the context of it being a nation-State (albeit deprived of a sense of 'nationhood') of new forms of citizenship rights, whether individual or group-based, whether political, economic, or religious. This opens opportunities for new types of actors and new ways of acting. The enthusiasm of ending the 'Arab colonialism' through secession has been replaced with a sad realisation that its 'revolution' has failed to deliver freedom and an appropriate durable political/institutional representation to all its diverse societies. Sadder still, is the cumulative result of the Second Sudanese civil war, which left more southerners dead from fighting one another than fighting the 'Arabs' from Sudan.¹³⁰

2.10. An issue of 'population engineering'?

The long journey to statehood cemented on July 9, 2011, is only part of a process still unfolding a decade on in South Sudan. Most currently, the 2018 R-ARCSS has solidified the peace settlement, which remains centred at the high-level politics of South Sudan¹³¹, though it has also engulfed powerful neighbours in the escalation of violence since, placing South Sudan in an awkward position as a result of deteriorating relationships between countries in the Horn and Great lakes region. What we see now unfolding in South Sudan is, according to UN's South Sudan Human Rights Commission (SSHRC), a case of "population engineering" from the government and allied forces, in which civilians primarily pay the price for the elite's political wrangles.¹³² The SSHRC experts identified a pattern of ethnic cleansing after they visited Malakal and saw how the redrawing of state boundary lines helped depopulate the town of its Shilluk and Nuer inhabitants, and firmly attributed the forcible relocations on the basis of their ethnicity.¹³³ It is not possible to leave such a crucial development out of analysis, or an overall understanding about modern South Sudan, which brings in further disciplines of political geography (Raeymakekers,2009, Bakony,2021) and demographic studies to map present and future projections of population census.¹³⁴ The challenges of governing a diverse nation will go on, as South Sudan's 'displacement crisis' deepens and returns are mostly short-lived.¹³⁵ Ethnic cleansing is repeatedly denounced by advocacy groups, governments and the UN, though more

¹³⁰Zach Vertin, 2022. "A rope from the sky", p257.

¹³¹ACLEED, 2020. "Last man standing".

¹³²AP news. March 14, 2017. *UN expert warns of South Sudan population engineering*. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/2e6a8d537d66494d842600a496bcfb5>

¹³³ OHCHR, March 14, 2017. Speech of the chair of SSHRC. Accessed November 7, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2017/03/speech-chair-commission-human-rights-south-sudan-human-rights-council>

¹³⁴Mayai, 2020. *South Sudan's demography- Looking into 2050*. Better Aid Forum Briefing Paper, CRSF

¹³⁵ACLEED 2020; IOM 2019, 2020; IDCM 2021.

generally, it has either been considered by analysts from the point of view of history, (ethnic nationalism or interpreted as the “dark side of democracy” (Mann, 2005). The link between the expulsion of targeted communities and the policy and practice of (national) security continues underemphasised in the literature. Yet, at various times, ethnic cleansing has been used as a security-creation mechanism in the process of State building (Greenhill, 2010).

In the absence of consensus, however, violence is used to achieve certain goals, creating a situation in which violence takes over where power is either not available, or mutually contested. The *Jieng* council of Elders, to which president Kiir is a member, assumes such power as given, led on by misguided notions of a ‘Dinka’ supremacy over all other groups’.¹³⁶ Interestingly, when fighting with the north, all southern groups were seen as minorities within an oppressive powerful ‘other’; something that Dinka elite fails to appreciate in their roles within an independent nation, where the spoils of violence are justified in the language of ‘rights’, and often explained in common language as in having “fought for this peace”¹³⁷, when confronting those who opted to flee and later return to find their homes and land taken over. Local adaptations are shaped by the structures of new administrative areas and the power imbalance they create- within the State. This context presupposes the new kinds of social spaces that have been created by ‘extra-legal’ institutions – such as the *Jieng* council of Elders – to transform South Sudan in an ideal State through the mechanisms of “power sharing agreements”, accommodating elites at the expense of local population displacement.¹³⁸

As urbanising processes play out alongside displacement (Bakony,2021; Badiy,2014; McMichael,2014), local people draw on interpretation, authority and reform within their own discursive traditions, part of an old history of disagreement, dispute, and physical conflict with other people around them (Hutchinson 1996; Pritchard,1940). In this sense, displacement also generates continuities through the linkages to other (ethnic) traditions - stimulate reforms of these and further their self-reflexivity (Chapter 4). When these traditions meet modernity, they also meet liberal presuppositions about freedom and individual autonomy which have become naturalised in the Western scholarship (such as gender) shaping the way in which “agency” is

¹³⁶Kwaje, 2016. *Government’s operation ‘wipe out’ focuses on Magwi country*. Accessed July 11,2022. [https://www.nyamile.com/opinion/governments-operation-wipeout-focuses-on-magwi-county-of-ees/ ..](https://www.nyamile.com/opinion/governments-operation-wipeout-focuses-on-magwi-county-of-ees/)

¹³⁷Private communication with commercial officer, Arua (September 18, 2019), which mimics similar views elsewhere in the literature. See Leonardi, 2011. “*Paying buckets of blood for the land*”.

¹³⁸Pritchard and Verjee (2020) argued that the 2018 peace agreement disrupted the intended power-sharing agreements through the creation of 32 states. Eventually on February 2020, the GoSS announced the return to the previous 10 states. See Reuters. “US- South Sudan politics”. Accessed July 23, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-politics-idUSKBN2090AM>

understood in such studies.¹³⁹ Common to some of these studies is that agency is understood as an attribute or trait inherent to individual subjects, and that it is primarily circumscribed by external factors. Such external circumstances are often referred to people's autonomy, and how it is shaped by religion, their ethnic groups and families. Within such a framework, people are generally perceived to become more autonomous, thus increasing their capabilities of agency, and integration with a new environment. Here, the community, tradition and the family seem to operate as external constraints, and when these external constraints disappear, people are "free" to choose their identities and ways of life.

South Sudanese are thus central to the current analysis. They have been disrupted by a series of instabilities, shortages, constraints and blockages, some external in origin, others from within, but all promoting incoherence to an extent in which it is difficult to know what is "normal" and what is part of a "crisis." Hence, people's reactions are no longer part of survival strategies but rather regular ways of doing things. Take cross border trade as an example (in detail on chapter 7). soldiers, policemen, militias at checkpoints who are involved in the taxation of commodities - legal or illegal- and of individuals. These transactions require negotiating access and the running of businesses, some public others non-public, some subject to laws, others not. The notion of public power changes in the process and daily transactions become a constant negotiation of rights, in which the threat of transgressions of such rights or physical abuse have to be dealt with in various ways, mostly characterised by corruption, where the 'mobile' pay for rights that should be available through public services. The lack of regular payment in the South Sudanese and Ugandan public sector represents an insecure context for civil servants, pressing people to negotiate solutions to the problems they face. In sum, a situation of extraordinary tension prevails, forming subjective categories of individuals around the condition of 'constant' movement, as the State continues to be built upon it (Chapter 4, 5).

This thesis considers that the longer process that led to the creation of "others" allows the elite for example, to use their dominant position through which they impose their hegemonic discourse to classify others as inferior (Chapter 4.4). In this case, to address what the 'root causes' are, may not matter in processes characterised by mutation: It might be that what happens during a conflict is more important to the long-run trajectory of social, economic and political change than pre-war patterns of division (Woodward, 2007).¹⁴⁰ This is instructive in

¹³⁹Ensor, 2014; O'Byrne and Ogeno, 2020; Vancluysen, 2021.

¹⁴⁰Woodward, 2007. "Do the Root Causes of Civil War Matter? On Using Knowledge to Improve Peacebuilding Interventions", *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol.1, No.2, pp.143-70.

the case of South Sudan, where the transition moves away from the root causes that marked the north-south divide (Johnson 2010). The transition from war to peace means that the line between the past and the present is continually blurred, and each interacts with and shapes the other. Development and peacebuilding discourses problematically assume and work with temporal distinctions between the past, present and future, as well as discursively imagining other places as existing in the past (Kothari, 2011:65). Presently, in South Sudan, the ‘ghosts of 1991’ continue to haunt communities affected by the political-military authorities, whose past experiences in war has morphed into the current one. Consequently, it is also up to policy makers to be more realistic about the ways in which policies will mix into the flow of society’s history and not simply imagine that they will achieve the idealistic results they wish for them. As South Sudan’s second presidential elections have been once again delayed to late 2024¹⁴¹, the current scenario has much departed from a decade ago. Much also, lies in the boundaries and borders of South Sudan, where we see a paradigm between mobility and borders embroidered in different understandings about what it takes to reach State sovereignty. In the case of South Sudan, this is linked to the ways in which human – and also livestock - displacement are entangled in the State-making processes.

¹⁴¹Deng. M. 2022.South Sudan Again Delays its 1st Election, until Late 2024. Associated Press. August 2, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-sudan-south-juba-4f35064ef1173a9e14f6e60f55d36b50>

CHAPTER 3

Making Sense of the situation in South Sudan

3.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the methods utilised to document and analyse conflict and political violence, and displacement dynamics in the region under investigation. They derive from the three themes addressed in the previous chapter and are firmly situated within conflict theories of the State. In the decade since South Sudan became independent, an economy of information has grown in the field of conflict and political violence (ACLED,2010) and displacement tracking mechanisms emerged to try and understand the status of mobility, internal and cross-border displacement (IOM-DTM 2019; IDCM), along with qualitative based research on internal displacement and cross-border movements (REACH, 2019).¹⁴² They form the basis for second-hand resources to help map out and investigate mobility patterns and displacement dynamics along State-making processes in South Sudan. Academic scholarship has also dedicated research on the topic of African borders: The African Borderlands Network (ABORNE), which since 2008 has disseminated knowledge from various discipline angles about the ‘centrality of the margins’ (explored on Chapter 4) as a way to understand the ‘centre’.¹⁴³ And with the emergence of the ‘migration crisis’ in the Mediterranean in 2015, interest in African migration, mobility and displacement regained its momentum in cross-disciplinary research.¹⁴⁴ The importance of such studies reinforce thinking about how cross-border movement and forced displacement may relate to the historical and contemporary significance of borders in creating barriers, or requiring shifts in governance style when ‘dealing with the other’. In South Sudan, current debates about absolute borders between

¹⁴²Raleigh et al. 2010. “Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (5): 1–10. Accessed March 2, 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343310378914>

IOM, 2019. “Migration Health”. Accessed March 7, 2022.

https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DMM/Migration-Health/iom_ssd_pmm_report_2019.pdf. I thank Anu Atre from REACH South Sudan for sharing the ToR (https://www.impactrepository.org/document/reach/588cbe0c/reach_ssd_tor_populationmovementbaseline_june_2019.pdf) used to map population movement in South Sudan in the past 35 years. See REACH, “Population movement baseline” report, September 2020.

¹⁴³De Vries, 2012. *Facing Frontiers: Everyday practice of state-building in South Sudan*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Wageningen University; Zeller, 2015. *What Makes Borders Real – In the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan Borderlands*, PhD dissertation, University of Helsinki; Nugent, P. 2019. *Boundaries, Communities, and State-Making in West Africa: The Centrality of the Margins*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴⁴In 2017, the African Migration, Mobility and Displacement (AMMODI) platform emerged, with regular contributions to thematic studies around migrant-centred accounts of contemporary movements within and outside of the continent.

different groups often reduce a long history of coexistence and intermarriages, to claims over the need to establish absolute borders to resolve various disputes.

To investigate and identify the important linkages between the State, mobility and the borderland, methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity are employed in this thesis. All three thematic clusters attempt to weave together multiple qualitative methods to convey understanding about the role of displacement in the contemporary State-making process in South Sudan, and what emerges from this process, in the next four chapters. The reasons are twofold: first, a triangulation of different qualitative insights – individual interviews, Key informant interviews, FGDs, participant and environment observation - are pursued to form a balance between context and analysis. Because concepts are not universal, they need to be negotiated and translated further to convey a more accurate account of events unfolding in a particular period. Second, the limited data available through formal channels (in particular, South Sudanese government websites and reports) required analytical perspectives that avoid a single-source bias. Researchers of South Sudan have consistently acknowledged the difficulties in conducting research in the country, and of accessing reliable data (de Vries, 2012; De Simone 2016; Felix da Costa, 2016; Twijnstra, 2014; Ffram, 2018). With the return to civil war, the terrain in which South Sudanese and the humanitarian system operates, became once again heavily characterised by limited and restrictive access and mobility, making also more difficult to pursue quantitative research analysis. Hence, Ugandan and South Sudanese online media outlets have been followed and relied upon for factual references, commentary and opinion several times, as events unfolded alongside the conduct of research. There are however, difficulties of dealing with unreliable and questionable sources in the region, not only because South Sudanese are deemed highly traumatised, but obstacles with literacy mean that radio has become the most popular news medium. Internet access is almost non-existent in the settlements, and only available to a small group in the urban areas. Websites of radio stations like the UN-sponsored Radio Miraya, Radio Tamazuj, and the US-based VOA news were consulted, as well as the South Sudanese website Gurtong and the South Sudanese NGO Forum, and the Conflict Sensitivity Research Facility (CSRF).

Uganda's government agencies' reports are an useful tool to obtain information on regional economic dynamics such as cross-border trade and reports by UBOS have been the most proximate available sources to obtain information about imports and consumption to South Sudan – given that such data did not exist in the country prior to 2011 (Twijnstra 2014). Except

from my Uganda Bureau of Standards (UBS) contact and the staff from the MTIC who provided commentary and opinions on data gathering and analysis on the situation in South Sudan, the South Sudanese SUDD Institute reports were relied on for factual accounts. Grey literatures were relied upon to counter the biased and oftentimes questionable accounts from ‘gatekeepers’¹⁴⁵, such as the example of preventing access to individuals, as it happened in Elegu with the BISO officer (Chapter 6.5). In Adjumani, the initial dismissal from an OPM in Pakele – who thought of me as a journalist - was solved by the approval of access to research from the District Commissioner. The qualitative research methods also proved fluid and unstable under political and security developments that unfolded in South Sudan at the time, with immediate effects along the borderland and settlements.

Further analysis of such developments – some of which are integrated in the chapters - both at the local and transnational levels, will require adding the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and of the introduction, in January 2021, of the Continental African Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which this thesis does not cover. Epidemics and regional trade integration agreements both have the ability to impact significantly the livelihoods of borderland inhabitants. Development planners thus must consider refugee settlements’ housing structures near borderlands, as they pose significant questions about the sustainability of trade and transportation routes going to South Sudan. Conversely, the situation outlined in this thesis is important, in that population displacement is tied to both State-making and regional economies via the borderlands. Thus, the research participants were drawn from multiple ethno-linguistic backgrounds and from different areas in South Sudan, while Ugandan sources included traders, commercial officers, officials from the Ugandan Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC), drivers, Ugandan police officers, all directly familiar with the regional context, as well as their relationships with South Sudanese in the public sphere. More generally, the sample size is not representative, nor for the South Sudanese displaced in Uganda, or South Sudanese in their own country. The thesis avoids a replication of a generalised notion about ‘the refugee experience’ (Malkki,1996). Rather, it offers the rich diversity of respondents and their own experiences of the situation that befalls them. Taking stock of the variations in the way displacement is studied, defined and understood, the conceptual frameworks are fluid and develop along with the context and situation in which they are described. Hence the use of ‘displaced’ or ‘displacees’ rather than ‘refugees’ (unless

referring to legal terms) is preferable in this dissertation, and in reference to the ambiguity of the term in practical ways – either voluntary or forced displacement. Many displaced South Sudanese interviewed made it clear they do not think of themselves as a ‘refugee’, because “I did not want to come here, I was forced to become a refugee”¹⁴⁶, disassociating themselves from others who have voluntarily left South Sudan. Such statements made me reflect on the circumstances people find themselves and the choices they are forced to make. On many occasions, interviewees expressed the necessity of maintaining an option to cross back to South Sudan to visit family, to work and other reasons which, adhering to a rigid refugee status, mean such cross-border movements are ‘illegal’. This situation has generated debates on the legal sphere of rights, such as freedom of movement and agency, which compels a better revision of such conceptual tools. As Malkii (2017:502) observed, a “displaced person has come to be used widely as a synonym for refugee; in a legal sense the two terms are not interchangeable, though they overlap in substantial ways”.

This fits the situation of cross-border movement between South Sudan to Uganda, which involves individuals with both a legal refugee status; those in possession of a refugee identity card and adhering to OPM ruling regarding movement, and those without, like self-settled displacees. It is therefore difficult to account for those who perform cross-border movements to South Sudan in breach of the refugee status agreements with regards to settlement. In addition, since both groups are involved in cross-border movements, with border officials and brokers at times facilitating their movements in exchange for a fee, it is unlikely that cross-border movement prevention will succeed. The practice of ‘*multi-site living*’ among displaced South Sudanese in Uganda emerged from the present research, as conducive to the situation vis-à-vis South Sudan, where displaced communities benefit from their geographical location and the transportation systems that developed to address access and mobility needs. Conceptually and empirically, this turns an analysis about the impacts of displacement into cross-border mobility within the broader theme of African borders, encompassing a new phase in the borderland economies (Chapter 7). These insights can provide new ways of sharpening an analytical framework to understand how displaced individuals in Uganda validate their cross-border movements and identities vis-à-vis the South Sudanese State (Chapter 4 and 5). By the same token, local and transnational forms of tax collection, as well as governance structures set up by non-state armed actors with network links to business and political figures

¹⁴⁶Interview with displaced South Sudanese from Loa (EES), in Pagrynia settlement, 6/11/2019.

(Chapter 6) constitutes a way of turning informal institutional arrangements into portable assets across the region. Ultimately, human mobility entails complex assemblages of movements that overlap with power structures, paving the way for hierarchies of mobility outside the parameters of the State in question.

3.2. Methods, field sites and improvisation

The various assemblages of movement inspected in the Great Lakes Region (in particular within refugee settlements), are complex and difficult to document. Over the past three decades, scholars have identified a nexus between humanitarian assistance and aid dependency to explain why States seek to prevent displaced individuals from moving into local residential, agricultural and commercial spaces.¹⁴⁷ Because displacement may go hand in hand with urbanisation and growing institutional bureaucracies (Bakonyi, 2021), their interference with everyday mobility still hinders important aspects of State-society relationships. The method or enquiry thus allows for participants to convey their understanding of being forcefully displaced, through a process that sees past unresolved problems of identity, citizenship and belonging being morphed into present conflicts. Methodological pluralism approach to the thematic focus of the thesis required also that the process of data collection be multi-site, to better explore the three key themes – Borders, Mobility and the State (Chapter 2). In practice, this means establishing a presence at border crossings, refugee settlements and urban areas along the borderland between Uganda and South Sudan, where the State can also be seen as ‘following people’ everywhere.

The multi-site approach to data collection applied to gather information from multiple locations and oral sources, includes also the obstacles, setbacks experienced, which add value to existing ethnographic techniques as explored by Marcus (1995), to ‘follow the people’, ‘follow the thing’, and follow the story’:

“Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions of locations in which the researcher establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that defines the argument of the ethnography”

Marcus 1995:105

¹⁴⁷Landau, 2008. *The Humanitarian Hangover: Displacement, Aid and Transformation in Western Tanzania*. Witz University Press; Malkii, 1995. “*Refugees and Exile: From refugee studies to the natural order of things*”, Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1995): 495-523. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.002431>

This approach has framed the way data collection was broadly organised around the experiences of displaced South Sudanese in the context of violence and insecurity. Maintaining a physical presence in the various locations inhabited by displaced individuals thus allowed me to observe and experience moving along transport routes used by displaced and local communities, and traders, interacting with actors at border crossings, roadblocks and checkpoints, thus forming an association between sites, actors and the various events that unfolded during the lifecycle of field research. To follow on ‘stories’ about particular South Sudanese groups, three FGDs were organised in a rather unplanned way. They each took place in a different environment than the other, and with participants coming from different regions in South Sudan. The discussions began very broad about secession and narrowed down to experiences of individual and collective violence which led them to leave their homes. The field research draws from qualitative interviews and fieldnotes collected between August 2019 and February 2020 in Uganda, mainly in the West Nile region. The research sites are Arua, Yumbe and Adjumani, all hosting the refugee settlements accessed: Rhino, Bidibidi, Mungulla, Pagrynia, Boroli and Aylo 1. Interviews and non-participatory observation at border crossings included Oraba-Kaya, Odramachaku-Ariwara, Goli-Mahagi, Salya Musala and Vurra-Aru, while frequent travels across the region on public transport between Arua and Adjumani, following the Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo road down to the ferry in Laropi were completed three times. Additionally, the Elegu-Nimule border, and Gulu, both in Amuru sub-region, and Kampala were also accessed for interviews and non-participant observation. The data comprises of a total of 137 qualitative interviews primarily with displaced South Sudanese (105 individuals and 3 FGDs), followed by traders, drivers, representatives from local business associations, Ugandan commercial officers, security officers, Revenue Authority officials, Customs and Immigration officials, staff from the MTIC (29 interviews). Some interviews were repeated, which means the total number is higher, close to 160 interviews.

Most displaced South Sudanese in Uganda reside in one of 23 settlements in West Nile sub-region, the largest of which include Bidibidi and Rhino.¹⁴⁸ Self-settled individuals are reported to live close to the South Sudanese border and are primarily cattle herders who cannot bring their herds into the refugee settlements. Other South Sudanese live in the urban areas of West Nile, such as Arua, Koboko, Moyo and Adjumani, rather than the settlements, because of better

¹⁴⁸REACH, 2017. *Regional Displacement overview*. Accessed February 12, 2022. https://www.impactrepository.org/document/reach/31ec0724/reach_ssd_situation_overview_regional_displacement_of_south_sudanese_march_2018.pdf

access and quality of healthcare and schools, previous connections with the host community, or because the land provided in the settlement is not suitable for cultivation. There are also South Sudanese in Uganda who had been displaced so frequently and for such a long duration that they now own land and businesses in these towns. Relations between the displaced and host communities are reported to be mostly positive in Uganda by South Sudanese and local key informants, in which shared background is usually cited by respondents to explain this. However, South Sudanese interviewed also added that the extended duration of displacement has strained host community resources, causing occasional tension between refugees and host communities (Chapter 5).

The changing dynamics of population movement and the economic activities in this region documented in the past decades (Meagher, 1990; Titeca, 2009; Titeca and Trwijnstra, 2016; Raeymaekers, 2014b) form an important background to the context of South Sudan's State-making, the conflicts it has exacerbated and the displacement it has caused. While cross-border activities contributed significantly to an understanding about the violent transformative processes under capitalism, and the actors and relationships between networks that populate both the borderland and the centre, the logic of association or connection among sites earn meaning with the unprecedented influx of South Sudanese to Uganda. The vast terrain in which displaced South Sudanese inhabit spreads out to old and new settlements, urban dwellings, and private homes, and they mix with older generations of displaced communities. This has created both a set of opportunities and limitations to South Sudanese communities whose livelihoods depend on access across borders, and who come also as consumers of an expansive borderland economic system. Eventually, constraints on the ground prevented research in South Sudan and Eastern DRC and my ability to collect data was partially calibrated towards the food and transportation system between Ugandan sites and South Sudanese destinations (Chapter 7). A semi-structured method of enquiry was initially adopted, although given the diversity of living experiences of research participants, and the sharpening of analytical framework around cross-border mobility, I have changed the enquiry methods after the initial month (Chapter 3.4). As a result, it was possible to capture how the borderland itself has been impacted by security concerns and instability due to the high influx of displaced South Sudanese and the tensions that emerge around its fragile peace agreement.

3.2.1. Main field sites

I was based in West Nile's capital of Arua, a bustling market town near the border with eastern DRC's Ituri province, and South Sudan's central Equatoria state (CES). For over a century, this region has been the site of intensive cross-border movements, socio-economic activities and mass displacement during wars and violent conflicts in DRC, Uganda and Sudan (Chapter 4). The Office of the Prime Minister's (OPM) Headquarters in Arua was my first point of contact from to obtain approval to access Rhino, Bidibidi and Adjumani settlements and interview refugees, while the office of the mayor granted access to the local markets and main actors working in the regional and cross-border food supply industry. My stay at one of Arua's local hotels quickly emerged as the epicentre of various meetings, networking opportunities, as well as non-participant observation. Nearby South Sudanese restaurants also proved valuable to observe and interact with regular customers, many who travelled to South Sudan, DRC and other parts of Uganda, and some participated in the research.

I travelled from Arua to Rhino settlement, a one-hour drive, sharing taxis with the settlement residents. In Yumbe, I stayed inside Bidibidi settlement, on zone 1. Bidibidi at the time was the world's largest refugee settlement, divided into 5 zones. It was the site of greatest importance to the research, with its city-like composition and almost 300,000 South Sudanese inhabitants sharing land and resources with the host community. From Yumbe, the road continues to Moyo and down to Adjumani, where it was necessary to cross over the Nile river, a total of about five hours from Yumbe. I was accommodated at the Youth Centre, and accessed the settlements - Aylo 1, Boroli, Pagirynia and Mungula – via motorcycle.

Figure 3. Research sites within West Nile region and its borderland.



3.3. Connecting the dots: multi-site data Collection

In consideration to the challenges and setbacks stated above, the conduct of qualitative research involved also Ugandan food markets and cross-border transportation systems, which became significant due to its intimate association to supplying Juba markets and households. With the help of commercial officers in Arua, Koboko, Adjumani and Gulu, the complex and fragmented relationship between cross-border business partners, outlines changes and continuities in the context of the conflict (Chapter 7), while the way in which the borderland economy incorporates the settlements, contributed to generate knowledge on how displaced make use of opportunities and respond to limitations in relation to the pull and push factors towards South Sudan (Chapter 5).

The number of research sites were increased following the initial two months, meaning that four settlements and border crossings were added from the initial plan to conduct research in

Rhino and Bidibidi settlements, and Elegu- Nimule, Arua- Ariwara borders. The relative ease to travel in northern Uganda, and the fast- evolving networking opportunities made it possible for me to add more sites and thus, increase the sample size. Methodologically, my interest lies on how interviewees interpret their experiences of displacement and convey a sense of individual and collective understanding about the issues afflicting South Sudan(ese); what opportunities and limitations emerged as result of displacement; and how civilians relate to the State of South Sudan having voted for secession. Extensive analysis of interview transcriptions aided in the identification of common topics and conceptualisations.

The heterogeneous data derived from multiple disciplines from which key definitions and concepts emerge – the State, Borders and Migration - help understand the relationship between them. My inclination to focus on this particular South Sudanese displacement has also made the evidence-based underpinning these concepts, more associated to studies about refugees and the broader humanitarian architecture in northern Uganda, which has already produced a vast amount of valuable work of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda (Kaiser,2006, 2010; Hovil,2010; O’Byrne 2021; Vancluysen,2021). The qualitative methods used for organising and analysing a varied set of data consisted also of misleading information, omissions, contradictory statements, euphemisms, and incomplete accounts, all covering the topics explored in each empirical chapter. Thus, all the information presented in this thesis should be considered indicative of key themes that are commonly discussed, but of uneven importance. Findings should not be taken as representative of the population, especially when considering the vast geographical reach such research would have to cover. Further assessment is needed to cover additional populations in other economic zones such as Juba and DRC markets, to explore key findings deeply, and engage with more targeted research.

3.3.1. A ‘silent note’ on violence

Masked behind mundane everyday events and exchanges, however, lies a complex and delicate relationship between the South Sudanese and host community that finds past and present conflicts entangled with memories, both at the individual and collective level. The way in which South Sudanese and Ugandan societies reconstruct and bring the past into the present - especially the historical past – allows insights into intergroup conflict dynamics not always visible or easily understood by outsiders. In Arua, I often heard narratives portraying regional migrants, and especially refugees, as the source of crime and violent attacks in urban areas.

These narratives would gain steam during December 2019, as locals would make a connection between school break – when many South Sudanese youth come to spend time in Arua – and the increase of petty crime. Though perpetrators come from many nationalities and backgrounds, even local authorities were eager to lay the blame on youth deriving from South Sudan. In Koboko, the border town opposite South Sudan’s Kaya, I met with displaced South Sudanese and their Ugandan counterparts, to discuss about individual and groups’ experience of violence, through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on August 26, 2019. Both in Arua and Koboko, groups of South Sudanese Urban Refugees (SSURA) have formed a ‘trauma healing’ Association, aimed to address common issues the community faces, and to provide a platform for trauma healing. Ugandans and Congolese – who are also largely ethnic Kakwa - also participate and support the Association. To access individual and collective memory about the evolving situation in South Sudan had been difficult, as many participants expressed some level of concern about discussing topics that might put them under suspicion from others, similarly to what I had encountered in Rhino settlement (Chapter 3.4). Not surprisingly, the message was clear: “we do not speak much about what happened, because we become depressed. And we want to move forward.”¹⁴⁹

Figure 4. South Sudanese Urban Refugees Association in Koboko.



Author’s photograph, Koboko, August 26,2019.

¹⁴⁹Focus Group Discussion in Koboko, August 26,2019.

Throughout the field sites, I encountered several attitudes and behaviours around a ‘silent’ coping strategy; some are familiar to studies tackling the problem concerning the transition of ex-combatants into society, where individuals must hide their past identity to avoid stigma or some form of retaliation. In northern Uganda, this means South Sudanese in the settlements with a past background working for the army, or their wives found in the settlements, which earned me several frustrated attempts to tackle issues of dealing with omission.

Though in general, South Sudanese have recounted experiences with violence and evaluated against the previous war, at most these have remained abstract and filled with metaphors, hyperbole, and discourses of ‘othering’. At the individual level, women represent the majority of settlement’s population, though they remained largely reserved about using the word ‘violence’, referring to it instead, as ‘challenges’ or ‘disturbances’ (Chapter 5). As violence often dominates much of the debates about South Sudan, it can also obscure important features about the relationship between land, borders and governance in a diverse society. Many research participants and interlocutors who also hailed from either refugee or host community, have drawn from their memories -some recent, others from long ago- about their relationship with land, and their relationships with other South Sudanese societies, often associated with attacks and violent episodes. The issue of boundaries and borders had been also mostly framed within events in the post-independence period and has only exacerbated people’s ability to cope with high levels of insecurity. Women participants have been less vocal about their experiences with direct violence, though on observation, silence, lack of eye contact and feeling unease, indicated that reliving memories which were not intended, required a different approach. There were also differences between urban and rural settings, which reflects the nature of access to information and the lived experiences of women from different social and economic backgrounds.¹⁵⁰ I had not made a conscious decision to focus on women’s voices over male, and the outcome was simply due to chance, and the fact that the majority of settlements’ residents were women. Overtime, talking to South Sudanese women across various Ugandan sites, made me aware about factors influencing the kind of information many would share or omit, though these were also largely associated with a male voice behind, ‘coaching’ them on what to say, should a foreigner come to ask questions (Chapter 6.5.1). Lastly, my position

¹⁵⁰I thank Cherry Leonardi for helping clarify and share observations on interviewing South Sudanese women, and for helping with online resources in the Sudan archive at Durham university.

(foreigner, white, female, student) as defined by research participants, also determined what the focus of the discussion would be.

3.3.2. Positionality and knowledge production

My European appearance, my gender, and not the least, my ‘occupation’ as a student, all influenced my access to sites and information from a variety of actors in the field. Having a dual nationality, I would also find myself juggling between being German (country of birth) or Brazilian (country I grew up in), whichever identity would mostly stand out in favour of granting me ‘access to information’. People’s reaction to my presence would vary between not giving importance, to suggesting I could be a journalist or even a spy. Having dealt with these situations before, I felt confident to negotiate access whenever I encountered difficult situations and remained vigilant on debates about researcher/insider position and how this influences the outcome of data collection. By chance, an article based on research by David Mwambari caught my attention when it came out in September 2019, which would turn into a surprise opportunity in the field.¹⁵¹ David Mwambari and Arthur Owor had opened up a discussion on the ‘black market of knowledge production in Africa’ (2019), pointing out the unfair relationship between the white western researcher and local African assistants, also referred to as ‘brokers’. More importantly, they question the effect of money in the production of knowledge in post-conflict contexts and argue that this practice restricts independent local researchers.¹⁵² The method and application of field research practices that make use of local researchers and assistants is thus questioned. How is the process of data collection and the use of local assistants contributing to the production of knowledge? Is it ethical and fair? Is it free from harm? What (and who) is left behind in the field? Will the local communities benefit themselves, or is the data simply meant for the foreign community? While meeting Arthur in Gulu, I was able to share my current experiences and frustrations concerning data collection, and to learn from his own experiences with other foreign researchers.¹⁵³ There is much relevance in such debates against the general unimportance given to the question of money as a divide between the foreigner and the local researcher in the knowledge production process. As a counter argument, some

¹⁵¹Al Jazeera, September 6, 2019. *Africa’s next decolonisation battle should be about knowledge*. Accessed February 12, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/9/6/africas-next-decolonisation-battle-should-be-about-knowledge/>

¹⁵²Green, D., April 2, 2019. *The black market of knowledge production*. Oxfam. Accessed February 10, 2022. <https://oxfamapps.org/fp2p/the-black-market-of-knowledge-production/>

¹⁵³I am grateful to both Arthur, whom I met twice in Gulu, and David Mwambari who kindly took time to see me at Kings College in London, immediately upon my return from Uganda, February 2020.

western-based researchers justify non-payment on grounds that it constitutes bad practice of ‘buying research’.

These questions were partly explored during a research training prior to fieldwork, yet people seem to have mixed feelings about these ethical and moral dilemmas. Though there has been progress in research training, the divide between foreign and local researchers is still exists.

Arthur was clear and logical about the need to provide proper remuneration and credit the research work done by local researchers, who devote equal time, if not more, to field research work, only to have their names written off research papers, or appearing in footnotes and acknowledgement sections. It was a conscious decision not to hire a permanent research assistant because this would involve them coming forward at different places and liaise with different actors, with no one be able to control the outcome. The initial situation at Rhino, and the responsibility I felt towards those accompanying me, who also work for local NGOs as well as reside in the settlement, reinforced a decision against exposing a local ‘assistant’ to harm.

To generate knowledge about the South Sudanese cross-border displacement, and to identify how it connects to the State-making enterprise in South Sudan, a historical overview about the regional context guides the background to discussions of ‘mass expulsions’, and also coercion towards the settlement of people in refugee and IDP camps throughout, an often occurrence in the African continent (Dowty,1986). Both attempts at ‘promoting’ and ‘preventing’ movement – according to Quirk and Vigneswaran – produce new political economies around borders (physical spaces and socioeconomic boundaries), living and working conditions, many of which are studied through the notion of ‘informality’. South Sudanese’s experiences through continuous displacement, suffers from significant misunderstandings and lack of contextual knowledge, which are mostly ignored by humanitarian agencies and international communities. Thus, emancipated from NGOs and the wider humanitarian architecture, I spoke directly to the affected community in an environment relatively free from dangers, as the northern Uganda settlements generally provide a safe environment. This allowed a significant contribution to knowledge production about a concept of displacement, which is not clearly defined or understood in what it means through lived experience. The research thus looks at the situation in South Sudan from its shared borderland with Uganda, which has entered a new phase with its intense cross-border movements.

Immersed in a changing and evolving situation, the fragile peace and negotiations underway in South Sudan were closely monitored by both the displaced and host communities, and not the

least, the security sector along the borderland. By researching the situation in South Sudan involving the displaced population in Uganda, traders and various actors who habitually navigate the cross-border landscape – many of whom certainly profit from it - knowledge also derives from observing the movement of people and goods along the roads, roadblock and checkpoints travelled through. Another layer to the knowledge production involved much of the daily, and seemingly unimportant interactions with the environment and people outside of official channels. The explorative nature of this research thus produced many topics around the three main clusters, which bind together a history of mobility, border/ing and State-making, still unfolding in South Sudan. To begin, a choice was necessary to locate the historical point of reference of the borderland region. The Lado Enclave period, at the turn of the 19th century, is referred to in this thesis as giving rise to the modern trajectory of the borderland region which divided local communities in what is today parts of Eastern DRC, Uganda and South Sudan (Chapter 4).

3.4. Testing the field: the beginning of qualitative interviews

On August 22, 2019, I left early in the morning with a South Sudanese boda-boda driver to Rhino settlement. Equipped with my papers and the permission from the OPM to conduct interviews, we were met by my friend and assistant, Martin. Our first attempt to begin with data collection, however, was not a positive one. In the compound of a South Sudanese family, we sat inside a small rounded *tukul*. While my driver had the surprise of his life by realising that one of the sons of the household was a long-lost schoolmate from South Sudan, the head of the household became less eager to talk to us. His sudden change of mood with the sight of my recorder, was due to suspecting I was a journalist. There were concerns about any political or religious topic being recorded and heard by someone who could ‘cause trouble’. As both Martin and I were strangers, and despite our efforts to provide enough information and emphasize confidentiality, the gentleman insisted he would not talk. He politely shook my hand and joined his family around a cooking pot. As we waited there to make plans for how to proceed, they stared serious at me, with their backs turned against us. We took it as a sign that they simply had the interest to protect themselves from harm. Rhino settlement is known to be visited regularly by South Sudanese armed actors who come after defectors, opponents, and young boys targeted for recruitment. News about this had been occasionally heard through word of mouth and local news.

Often, further approval from a settlement's block leader was required – who sometimes was difficult to locate - and be accompanied by an extra individual who was well known in the area, on top of the official camp management permission. On this initial month in the field, I had tested two questionnaires – one for individuals and one for Focus Group Discussions - with questions intended to initiate a discussion around the 2011 referendum. These were abandoned after the initial month for two reasons: one, the sight of a paper – just as the recorder – creates an atmosphere of formality unnatural and anxiety not conducive of the environment. The body language of my interviewees became stiff and rather worried about answering each question 'correctly'. Second, the rich and varied background and experiences of my research participants cannot be captured by adopting a strict format of enquiry, and where everyone answers and discusses about the same topic. Rather, the idea was to identify a common point of interest to reflect on their country's trajectory and present situation, and what changes this has brought to them as individuals, and communities.

After the initial experiences at Rhino, I turned attention to Bidibidi settlement, where I stayed with the South Sudanese/Ugandan community in zone 1, which was even more beneficial to the conduct of field research. Thus, while the initial plan for interviewing displaced communities included only Rhino and Bidibidi settlements, I have re-validated my strategies, to increase the sampling from Bidibidi, and eventually include also Adjumani town and the four settlements of Mungulla, Boroli, Aylo 1 and Pagrynia. As the increased in sampling and research sites gradually introduced new perspectives of displaced lives in the borderland region, the main research question was adjusted to better reflect the focus of the emerging data: "From War to Peace as Conflict goes on: Displacement and State-making during South Sudan's 2013-2020 conflict", from its original version¹⁵⁴, and to better address the incomplete nature of the field research and align it with the data collected. The variation in the lived experiences of South Sudanese from different socio-economic backgrounds, and also, the lived experiences of women, contrasted much with their male counterparts, especially in terms of mobility and security, from the point of view of perpetrators. (Chapter 5). I was then directed to explore more about variations in the way in which people coped with displacement, to challenge notions of homogeneity, such as assuming all refugees or displaced individuals are affected in equal terms as a result of conflict and violence.

¹⁵⁴The original thesis title was: *From War to Peace as Conflict goes on: Reinventing the state or ignoring it? Assessing the activities of armed groups and informal cross border trade networks in the borderlands between DRC, Uganda and South Sudan.*

The four sub-questions were kept around three thematic areas related to South Sudan: displacement (Chapter 4 and 5), armed actors and civilian relationship (chapter 6) and cross-border trade and mobility (chapter 7).

3.4.1. Relationships, gatekeepers and oral sources

Obtaining access to conduct academic research in Uganda had been a daunting bureaucratic process. Guidance were provided by researchers of/in northern Uganda and Ugandan and South Sudanese friends, and I embarked on a pre-field research visit to Uganda in February 2019, to initiate the process of applying for Ugandan research permits, consisting of; 1) affiliation to a local institution 2) research request from UNSCT and 3) affiliation to Makerere's School of social sciences. Additional permissions from the OPM in Kampala, Arua and Adjumani were obtained in August 2019, when I began to access the settlements, while further permissions were obtained from the local government authorities in Arua and Adjumani. These are merely the formal channels necessary to 'get in', though not all gatekeepers recognised them as valid, or paid attention only to the most valuable one according to their view.

I travelled from Kampala to Arua by bus and was greeted by Joseph in the bus station, a South Sudanese researcher who became a good friend. During my six months in northern Uganda, the assistance of friends and acquaintances from South Sudan, Uganda and beyond, who provided me contacts and basic logistics, were vital to navigate the research sites. Choosing interview participants was a relatively unstructured process. Because of the complex hierarchical structures in the management of refugee settlements, I first needed approval from the OPM and the camp commander. My criteria for interviewing displaced South Sudanese was 1) participants must have been displaced from the current conflict – and not already in Uganda prior to 2013, and 2) participants would have to fall within a certain age group to remember the war to peace transition process from 2005 onwards in order to comment authoritative on this period of time. Although efforts were made to maintain a gender balance in the sampling, the fact that most displaced South Sudanese are women and children, unavoidably resulted in female participation (56) being higher than male (49) across all six settlements accessed (excluding FGDs). For research on cross-border trade and mobility, participants were randomly identified with help from Arua's commercial officer and in Adjumani, from the security officer at the Office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC). Moses proved an invaluable resource and source of local knowledge about the relationship between host and displaced communities, security, and cross-border relations.

Through my contacts in West Nile, data collection in Kampala and Gulu was further organised through snowballing. The research on armed actors and civilian relationships was re-organised to interviewing a smaller sample of former combatants, now displaced to Ugandan urban areas and settlements. The sensitivity of this final strand of research required discretion and was carefully organised with help from trusted members of the displaced community.

To protect participants and those who assisted during the course of field work, all names which are cited throughout the thesis are pseudonymised, while the names of participants from the displaced community are anonymised.

Lastly, oral sources from the South Sudanese community were a mix of ethno-linguistic and social backgrounds originating from various locations in South Sudan. From the outset, engagement with a single South Sudanese community was not pursued. Rather, it was necessary to document various and varied experiences of displacement and leave further categorisations and ‘groupings’ as they emerged. For one, this method sought to avoid biased views which can be replicated with regards to the conflict in South Sudan, and second, to avoid having community leaders/gatekeepers influencing the conduct of data collection among their constituents to convey a single (and misleading) narrative.

3.4.2. Working with assistants, interpreters

Each of the above levels of relationship and engagement were not free from contrasting interpretations, including about my own interests and motivations for ‘being in the field’. The quality and flow of information were often verified by engaging additional sources and surveying media news, where available. Although key informants (who hailed from the displaced communities themselves) were of vital importance to the cleaning of data, at times, their personal and generalised views got in the way of recording and interpreting information passed down from interviewees. Occasionally, I had to be more assertive when local assistants interfered with the conduct of interviews, and especially when they held different opinions from those being interviewed. More often, however, such incidents made the ‘noise’ created by an assistant bring about information ‘hidden’ in responses. Thus, having the insights and assistance from local municipal authorities and settlement residents added value and meaning to the conduct of field research and the relationship building process. The snowballed effect, from the moment I met Joseph at Arua’s bus station, grew into a wide range of local, national and international contacts within a few months in Uganda’s West Nile. Assistants and

interpreters were engaged directly from the settlements and paid a daily rate, as agreed among the researchers' community in Uganda.

3.4.3. Public traveling, accommodation and (not) crossing borders

Emancipated from the NGOs and the security protocols they carry, which often create a divide between foreign aid workers and local communities, I navigated the landscape on public transport and arranged for my own accommodations. This has initiated my immersion in the field, where Ugandan nationals, immigrants, refugees and displaced communities inhabit, and have been doing so for decades. In Kampala, I moved with the 'Safeboda' network of motorcycle taxis, which provides fast and affordable journeys covering the capital. Not many last-minute meetings and arrangements and short-notice errands, would have been possible without the use of this mode of transport. Traveling by bus between Kampala and Arua, usually took 8 hours, though at the cost of UGX 35.000 (USD5) rather than USD 230 for a flight between Entebbe and Arua's airstrip. Public transport not only allows for a great view of the country's landscape, but also, to experience and observe how mobility is practiced and by whom. To travel further overland to Juba from Arua, it would cost about UGX 100.000 (USD 20) rather than paying USD 170 for a one-way flight from Arua. Northern Uganda has an economy of its own due to the high refugee influx, and the poorer status of its communities, which makes informality predominant, even with projects aimed to ease the costs of mobility, trade and transportation, topics that are often the source of preoccupation and complaints from the public. My accommodation in Arua, Gulu, Kampala and Elegu were at local hotels, while in Yumbe, I stayed at the training center built by a South Sudanese and run by Bidibidi settlement residents. Rachel welcomed me when I first arrived in September 2019. She has shared her story, listened carefully to my plans and motivations, and wasted no time in setting up contacts she thought would be of help (Chapter 5.2.1). In Bidibidi, we walked almost all the time, and by my final visit there during the first week of December, we covered all of zone one's 14 villages. Research trips to the six borders were arranged with local contacts, and reached by motorcycle, saved by Elegu. I did not cross the Elegu-Nimule border, nor conducted interviews at the border markets, as the head of security turned down all my valid permissions and after two days of waiting, I left for Adjumani (Chapter 6.5).

3.4.4. Following the story: merging facts and rumours

In November 2019, South Sudanese's eyes turned to the expectation that the third attempt to make the R-ARCSS materialise on November 14. The result – a third delay - caused widespread frustration, and tensions escalated in the region, especially among the displaced communities who have much to lose in such political games. Reflecting on popular discourses made around the week before the agreement was delayed, a South Sudanese trader in Adjumani summarised the lack of trust: “If you are milking that cow, you will not like someone to take the cows away from you. Because that milk cannot end !”¹⁵⁵ The unexpected interactions I had in Adjumani, accentuated my interest to learn more about power dynamics across these borderlands. In the background of regional tensions, which continued for much of December 2019 as well, South Sudanese from the settlements were seen leaving in big numbers toward Nimule. Rumours about people going to Nimule to ‘get into the payroll if peace’ comes, spread fast, as did about women in camps being lured to join in the bush, and young boys being offered money to join the conflict (Chapter 6).¹⁵⁶ These were reinforced by settlement residents’ accounts, the local news, and NGO workers.

As in the previous few months, several oral sources and media coverage laid emphasis on popular knowledge about the conflict, involving in particular, the Equatoria region and its diverse societies. To my view, the role of rumours must not be discounted in forging a kind of knowledge that is based on the local, lived experiences of citizens who offer emotive accounts of how society thinks about, reacts to and views the State.¹⁵⁷ It was not always clear whether information was factual or based on speculations. At times, situations evolved so fast and in such unpredictable ways, there was no time to record them. The window of opportunity had open during the (attempted) political transition, though people still prepared for the likelihood of more conflict, depending on which side power will tilt toward. South Sudanese and Ugandans react and respond quickly to news arriving through mobile phones, social media, newspapers and oral sources – especially those returning from a trip across the borders.

¹⁵⁵Interview with South Sudanese shop owner, Adjumani, 8/11/2019.

¹⁵⁶I was in fact around Laropi open market, near the crossing of the Nile between Moyo and Adjumani. My assistant and I spent the day observing people taking up the panya roads in the direction of South Sudan.

¹⁵⁷Oyewo, O. 2007 for example, draws attention to the role of rumours in the transmission of “matters of common pre-occupation, with ideas diversely offered and expressed”, and concludes that “opinions are weighed, statements are challenged, explanations are sought while certain information takes precedence over others.”

And because research along the South Sudanese borderlands (as in many other African borderlands) has become more dangerous, resulting from an increase in security and violent episodes, foreign researchers learn ‘on-the-go’ about the situation they are in during field work. Additionally, issues related to local bureaucratic and ethical guidelines for conducting research, on top of the researchers’ own institutional guidelines for field research abroad, resulted in an ambiguous set of ‘can dos’ and ‘cannot dos’ to be negotiate further afield.

3.5. Conclusion

In this Chapter, I explained the methodology behind data collection, the changes necessary improvisations adopted along the lifecycle of field research. I attempted to explain also, how knowledge about displacement is elicited through the interpretative narratives and testimonies of my sources and how observing the environment, people, and incidents occurring along the way, add meaning to this knowledge, including the challenges with and obstructions to data collection. The un-structured interviews, spontaneous conversations that emerged from unexpected meetings and random sampling helped expand the topics and provide a more nuanced account found in the empirical chapters, though these are not representative of a generalised image of the South Sudanese State and its diverse societies, and in turn, the degree in which displacement and cross-border mobility grounds the South Sudanese State or provide the very tools for the achievement of State goals, will require further investigation.

The challenges and access obstructions I met during my period in northern Uganda, were integrated in the descriptive data throughout the thesis, and not discounted as failures or omitted from the story in the chapters ahead. In a way, experiencing such ethnographic moments during the present transformation of the State, the borderland and its societies, were ultimately necessary to help challenge many ideas about heterogeneity, fixidity and of a western prototype social contract between South Sudanese and the State in the making, which were left hanging after the war to peace transition.

CHAPTER 4

Displacement, Mobility and State-making

4.1. Introduction

“I think Riek and Kiir are responsible for this mass displacement. Riek brought his tribe’s behaviour to the Equatorians and used politics to force people into this conflict. These leaders are also not consulting communities about the peace process.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement 4/12/2019

In this chapter, I introduce the contextual background to cross-border movements, the consolidation of the State that now carries the name of South Sudan, and the South Sudanese displacement (2013-2018). First, desk research on the historical transformation of the borderland region between South Sudan, Uganda and Eastern DRC, provides an overview of how displacement, mobility and State-making processes have long been intertwined in this region. Second, because the majority of research participants come from one of the three Equatorian states in South Sudan, the contextual background of the contemporary borderland provides grounds to examine why Equatorians are seen with suspicion, and even deemed ‘foreigners’ among South Sudanese political and military circles, despite inhabiting the region for centuries.¹⁵⁸ More importantly, this chapter serves to underline and support the contention that conflict-induced displacement possesses theoretical purchase significant to State-making practices in South Sudan. To understand these linkages, the multi-site research consisting of interviews conducted at border crossings, in the Ugandan settlements where displaced South Sudanese inhabit, formed the basis to explore **how does the GoSS reacts to population displacement and what does this mean to its relationship with Uganda?**

In the weeks after the R-ARCSS had been delayed a third time, I watched as South Sudanese in Uganda were left frustrated over the state of internal affairs in their country.¹⁵⁹ President Salva Kiir and SPLA-IO leader Riek Machar did not reached an agreement on key security and

¹⁵⁸Rowley, J. V. 1940. Notes on the Madi of Equatoria Province. *Sudan Notes and Records*, 23 (2), 279–294. Accessed May 4, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41716420>

¹⁵⁹On September 12, 2018, the GoSS and the SPLA-IO formalised a deal on conflict resolution, in which the former expected to return to Juba to form a transitional government in May 2019, and later delayed to November 2019. Disagreements and continuing fighting meant that its implementation had now been delayed a third time. The R-ARCSS can be downloaded from: <https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2112>

governance tasks, which were left pending for an additional 100 days.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, during November and December 2019, cross-border movement intensified, as many settlement residents looked to make a return to South Sudan, in movement patterns with mixed motivations and objectives.¹⁶¹ In one example, a man from Mugwo described what he saw during his trip to South Sudan to visit his mother at Yei's hospital. "The roads right now are in bad condition, and people are not there, as houses are destroyed. I feared the government soldiers but was not disturbed on the way. They are there in Mugwo". He had also gone home to work on his farm, as do other male South Sudanese officially residing on the Ugandan side of the border. To them, the political wrangles that sprung up from Juba in the July 2016 violence, are blamed on the two main opponents in the civil war. In 2016, the year many of those I interviewed had left for Uganda, an OCHA report indicated that 60-70 per cent of the population of Yei had been displaced.¹⁶²

The latest postponement of the R-ARCSS on November 7, 2019, meant that the year-long ceasefire was in danger of collapse, with higher insecurity along access roads and borders observed, and anxiety among displaced communities.¹⁶³ For men and young boys especially, cross-border movement between the Ugandan settlements and South Sudan is risky, and some do not make it back. Yet, the data compiled from interviews with displaced South Sudanese, their mobility habits indicate continuity, with men more likely to perform journeys back to South Sudan, while displaced women remain in Uganda (Chapter 5), however moving between settlements and urban areas. The precarious living conditions justifies cross-border movements back and forth to South Sudan, where many respondents accept the possibility of being robbed or killed, over the prospect of dying of hunger in the settlements.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰Voa News, November 8, 2019. South Sudan leaders again postpone creation of unity government. Accessed May 4, 2022. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_south-sudan-leaders-again-postpone-creation-unity-government/6179035.html

¹⁶¹Multiple movements were observed in urban and settlement settings towards the direction of South Sudan during this time, as I moved between Yumbe and Adjumani. My contact in Adjumani also provided consistent information on outward movements and we both observed in Laropi refugee market, South Sudanese taking 'panya roads' towards the direction of Nimule.

¹⁶²OCHA, 2016. Inter-agency Rapid Needs Assessment Report: Yei, Central Equatoria, 6-8 September 2016. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/160923_yei_irn_a_report.pdf. As a guide, the total population number of Yei prior to July 2016 was estimated at 300,00.

¹⁶³The New Humanitarian, 2019. "South Sudan slippage, preferential US Aid, and a high-profile UN resignation". November 8, 2019. Accessed May 9, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/11/08/South-Sudan-US-aid-UN-resignation-cheat-sheet>

¹⁶⁴Field notes from interviews conducted with male participants in Bidibidi, October 2019.

With intensified cross-border movements between Uganda and South Sudan, The Equatoria region is the focal point of tensions around land and property rights, while at the same time the region became deeply entangled in a web of conflicts – not all directly associated with the civil war.¹⁶⁵ A UNMISS report indicated that during 2016, “there was a noticeable increase in SPLM/A in Opposition activity and incidents involving unknown armed gunmen in Yei and the surrounding area.” After the governor requested army reinforcements, the result was an increased militarisation of the area, with about “600 armed individuals, who were either SPLA or SPLA-affiliated armed groups, sent to Yei”.¹⁶⁶ The period between July 2016 and January 2017 had a significant ripple effect across communities when particular ethnic groups were suddenly prevented from moving freely or forced to flee. One female from Morobo who came to Uganda via Congo around March 2016, explained that “the soldiers were first protecting us, but then when they saw us running towards Uganda, they [Dinka soldiers] started asking why we were running and began to kill some of the civilians because they did not wanted people to flee South Sudan”.¹⁶⁷

The situation in South Sudan with regards to internal movement, despite important, is not integrated in the State-making analysis made on and about Africa’s largest population displacement, but is rather treated along with other protracted displacement situations, as humanitarian crises to be addressed and resolved by practitioners (Krause 2016).¹⁶⁸ The intricacies between State-making and mass population displacement thus generate a pressing need to address State-society relations, and South Sudan’s relationship with Uganda after a long shared history of cross-border relations, including violent incursions from armed State and non-state actors.

4.2. The geographical puzzle

Geographically, an interest on South Sudan’s borderland with Uganda is inevitable due to several important reasons. First, the borderland provide a fresh perspective on State-making and State-society relations built from earlier scholarly work on cross-border dynamics.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵McMichael, G. 2016. “*Land conflict and informal settlements in Juba, South Sudan*”; Badiey, N. 2013. “*The strategic Instrumentalization of land tenure in “State-Building”: The case of Juba, South Sudan*”; Peter H. Justin, 2020. *State-building and Land Conflict in South Sudan*. PhD thesis, Wageningen University.

¹⁶⁶UNMISS, January 2017. UNMISS report on July 2016. Downloaded from: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SS/UNMISSReportJuly2016_January2017.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Interview with displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 05/09/2019.

¹⁶⁸While most of the cross-border displacement dates from late 2016 to 2017, there are significant numbers of individuals who left South Sudan during 2014 and have not returned to South Sudan by the end of 2019.

¹⁶⁹Kate Meagher initiated the debate on the cross border trade in the triple borderland (1990); Titeca has since followed up on work covering trade, conflict and security in the same region (2009;2009b;2012;2020) I am

Second, the borders between South Sudan and Uganda are of utmost importance to political and military elites with an eye on non-oil revenue collection through cross-border taxation.¹⁷⁰ Third, relationships in the borderland have undergone important changes in their respective sub-national areas, both as a result and consequences of colonial administration (Chapter 4.3), and the post-colonial – and South Sudan’s own independence - drive by elites to assert territorial based identities.

As Leopold found, “for more than a century, the Eastern Congo-Uganda-Sudanese frontiers have seen persistent conflict, widespread trading networks and massive forced migrations, all of which continue to the present” (2009:470). Although speaking of the Ugandan West Nile region more precisely, Leopold’s description aligns with what the present South Sudanese borderland reveals; the kinds of developments that helped shape the character of the State, in relation to its neighbours and with its own population.¹⁷¹ The regional geopolitics inherited by colonial rule has continued to provide inhospitable territories, often designated “ungovernable spaces”, as obstructions to the projection of external power. The triple borderland can thus be characterised on James Scott’s (1998) terms, where the designation of ‘unruly’ and ‘ungoverned’ terrains extends to their inhabitants, in that the people whose ways of living are flexible and more conducive of a mobile lifestyle from which the centre finds it hard to control. Broadly speaking, this challenges a fixed notion of territoriality assigned to African States, which goes against the historical experience, when control over people was more crucial than control over any territory.¹⁷² Wars then, were fought “to capture people and treasure, not land which was available to all” (Mbembe, 2018). People were highly mobile, and their mobility ensured a degree of accountability among political leaders, since populations could opt to move on to a different location if pressed too hard. Also, the limited interest of both Sudanese and Ugandan colonial administrations in defining the boundaries (Leonardi 2020:215) comes from a long history of boundary contestation.¹⁷³

grateful to both for answering the many questions I had; Kristoff, about conducting research in Arua, and about methods of enquiry (phone communication, November 5, 2018); and Kate, who received me in her office days after I returned from the field to share experiences in collecting data on cross border relations.

¹⁷⁰Twjinstra, 2014 Twjinstra and Titeca, 2016. In this thesis, this is only briefly explored on Chapter 6.

¹⁷¹Such as documented by Wolfgang Zeller, 2013. *Get It While You Can: Governance Between Wars in the Uganda-South Sudan Borderland*.

¹⁷²Kopytoff, I. 1989 for example, talks of pre-colonial Africa as a “frontier continent”, where rule and authority lacked the focus on territoriality thought so central to European history and State-making.

¹⁷³Johnson, D. 2010. *When Boundaries Become Borders: The Impact of Boundary Making in Southern Sudan’s Frontier Zones*, 101–4; Faisal Abdel Rahman Ali Taha, ‘*The Sudan–Uganda Boundary*’, Sudan Notes and Records, lix (1978); Ian Brownlie, *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia* (London, 1979), 1002–10; Leopold, 2009 ‘*Crossing the Line*’.

In practice, the borders accessed during fieldwork, constitute sites where boundary contestation is expressively exercised, both by displaced South Sudanese and sub-national communities, which helps conceptualise how displaced communities make sense of them and whether the borderland in general, offers some benefit or an obstacle to the movement of people and goods away from the centre. The principle of “these are our brothers”, is widely cited in reference to those who share not only the borders of South Sudan, Uganda and DRC, but also culture, language and experiences of being displaced on each other’s territories. Yet, this has not stopped the same communities from claiming territorial ‘belonging’ when they feel threatened by the presence of ‘foreigners’. The cross-border mobility of South Sudanese to Uganda, the transportation system that maintain the region’s supply and demand, and people’s perceptions about the South Sudanese State (in many ways, its inaction to solve the displacement issue) is often invoked to assert the changes in and around the borderland. Given this situation, the northern Ugandan settlements can be said to constitute the border with South Sudan. This chapter then informs partially, the new phase in the borderland’s history where conflict-induced displacement, cross-border trade and governance in the borderland can profoundly influence what happens on either side, and together, they provide incentives to displaced South Sudanese to exercise *multi-site living* in the context of State-led displacement and conflict.

4.3. From the Lado Enclave to Uganda’s West Nile

The records of African colonial administrators remain a source and resource to identify historical periods of change in State-society relations that lead to the types of political and economic institutions - and not the least border issues- inherited by post-colonial States. In a way, colonial administrators whose tasks were to identify and demarcate frontiers and boundaries for the purpose of administering diverse ethnic groups, can be said to have pioneered the political and economic institutions that emerged because of external interventions. Major C. H. Stigand’s posthumous accounts, as the first administrator of Equatoria under the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (1910-1919) at the time when Lado Enclave was ceded to Sudan, shared the sentiment that “boundaries should be tribal, and not geographical”.¹⁷⁴ To him, natural endowments such as rivers or mountains as representing tribal frontiers showed how limited outsiders were with regards to the spatial distribution and

¹⁷⁴Stigand, C. H., 1877-1919. Sir Wingate, F. R., 1861-1953. Equatoria: the Lado Enclave, 1923. Also, Taha, F. 1978. The Sudan-Uganda Boundary. *Sudan Notes and Records*, 59,p 1-23. Mentions the first proposal to demarcate the boundaries to the south. Accessed May 6, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44947531>

movement habits of the native people. Yet, in the eyes of the colonial government, “If the two banks [between river Nile and Kaya] are occupied by two different governments, it makes such people difficult to deal with, and it often affords an actual source of friction” (1923:2). The Lado Enclave was created in 1894 as part of King Leopold II’s Belgian Congo and had been situated on the left bank of the Bahr el Jebel (now South Sudan), where the northern and southern frontiers consisted of arbitrary lines. Its capital, Lado, was located near present day Juba.¹⁷⁵ Stigand was on the opinion that the confusing border demarcation exercises that took place in the region “should ruthlessly cut tribes and sub-tribes and even villages in two, and so can in no sense be considered good boundaries”, and aware that such lines “almost always become modified later by adjustment and exchange” (1923:1). Thus, when Lado reverted back to Sudan in 1910, the boundaries were again adjusted to suit tribal arrangements and the administrative requirements of the districts on either side.

Figure 5. The Lado Enclave by 1910.



Source: Major C.H. Stigand. *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave*, 1923, p 1.

¹⁷⁵The British at the time, feared a French advance toward the Nile River, and invited King Leopold II to occupy the Lado Enclave for the duration of his life. El-Rasheed 1984, p13.

As a result, the Lado Enclave became accessible through three routes: The Nile, the Ugandan railways, and the Congo River route. Ethno-linguistic and cultural similarities among Equatorial peoples were also redefined during the above processes, transferring people from one administrative area to another. As a result, “the Bari people became wholly under Sudanese administration, and the Alur wholly in Uganda. The Madi and the Acholi remain split, as the boundary was delimited arbitrarily, severing villages from their water and cultivation, and chiefs from their dependants” (ibid p 4). Stigand was also a consistent advocate for the southern separation from the Arab north, arguing before he died in 1919, for the separation as a condition of its development, on the basis that little could be done for the South "whilst they are subject to laws and regulations made for the benefit of the latter." In view of this, he proposed the appointment of a vice-governor-general for the South, under whom Southerners would be "allowed to work out their own salvation" as suitable to the people and local conditions. These views were boosted with the 1922 introduction of the Passports and Permits Ordinance which formally declared the South a closed district.¹⁷⁶ A new turn on the control of movement, primarily of northern Sudanese traders to the south, punctuated the social and economic development of southern Sudan since, contributing in decades to come, to the creation of a ‘common enemy’ to the South, located in the centre in Khartoum. The numerous attempts to demarcate the borders since, eventually led to the formation of three distinct nation-states, with the independence of Sudan in 1956, DRC in 1960, and Uganda in 1962, and initiated a new phase of cross-border mobility, which more generally in Africa became associated with conflict-induced displacement.

¹⁷⁶Okeny, 1991. *The 1947 Juba Conference*, pp 44. Accessed May 28, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43660336>

Figure 6. The ethnic landscape of Lado.



Source: Major C.H. Stigand. *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave*, 1923, p24.

There is a consensus among scholars that the colonial intervention in sub-Saharan Africa resulted in the creation of territories inhabited along ethnic lines (Leonardi and Santschi 2016; Mamdani 1996). The Kuku of Sudan for example, have been displaced and found refuge in Uganda long enough to be listed as an ethnic group there.¹⁷⁷ The results of attempting to demarcate the borders were also described by Collins (1962) as having the effect of “separating ethnic groups such as the Acholi, the Ma’di and the Kakwa, and cutting through the Nilotic and Sudani language groups.”¹⁷⁸ Although this would incur drawing the boundary through the Ma’di people, the frontier would pass between the northern and the southern Ma’di, whose relationship at the time was marked by great animosity. Captain Kelly, a member of a boundary commission in 1913, described the proposed boundary between Uganda and the Sudan, leaving to Uganda, the Acholi on the south and south western slope of the range (Collins 1962: 141–2). The colonial border then bifurcated a homogeneous area whereby individuals found their family members suddenly on the other side of it. New identities were formed, and little

¹⁷⁷Leonardi and Santschi, 2016. *Land Governance and Boundary Disputes in South Sudan and Northern Uganda*. Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute.

¹⁷⁸Collins, R., O. 1962. The transfer of the Lado Enclave to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1910. Sudan Archives, Durham university.

attention was paid to “ethnicity” or economic relations between different groups in the area. The commission found that due to time constraints, “only around 30 per cent of the boundary was properly mapped, none of it to the west of the Nile” (Leonardi and Santschi 2016:25). By 1914, changes rendered the Lado’s identity no longer recognisable, and parts of it were later abandoned, no longer appearing in modern maps. All of these changes within the space of forty years has hardly been matched by the formation of most modern States after WW2.

These experiences resurface with the complexity of the South Sudanese State-making process, that includes the issue of internal movements across different administrative areas in South Sudan, as well as cross-border movements beyond its international borders, a challenge to current territorial demarcation. The ethnic Kakwa do not interpret the international border as a strict barrier and continue to cross them regardless of border controls. More importantly, the sociological history of the borderland serves to counter the contesting narratives of South Sudanese elites, in their attempt to lay claims over ‘ancestor land’ (see Chapter 4.4). After all, who is a son of the soil, is a question difficult to answer. The Kakwa for example, are split across three separate international borders, and as a result, assigned to three corresponding nationalities: Congolese, Ugandans and Sudanese (South Sudanese after 2011).¹⁷⁹ At *Salia Musala*¹⁸⁰, the border between the three countries, they still meet and cross over to either direction, as if the formation of borders and separate nationalities had not taken place. On a second field trip to Koboko, the commercial officer had accompanied me to *Salia Musala*. From the Ugandan road north of the fig trees (Figure 7) which locals say it separates Uganda from DR Congo, two thatched roof houses built by the residents indicate the border passing between the Uganda-South Sudan border. Unknowingly, I had gone straight over to ‘DRC’, where a handful of French speaking boda-boda drivers were gathered, and was called over across the road, to ‘South Sudan’, where an IOM tent was in place due to the Ebola response at the time. There, our two South Sudanese contacts offered an overview about the role of *Salia Musala* as a border between the now split Kakwa group.¹⁸¹ In this remote area, there is no way of knowing where exactly the borders are, without the help of locals indicating their exact location.

¹⁷⁹Adefuye, A. 1985. The Kakwa of Uganda and the Sudan, in Asiwaju, A. (Ed.), *Partitioned Africans*, p51-69. New York.

¹⁸⁰A Kakwa word meaning ‘the three cooking stones’, a reference to three stones placed in the area to locate the point where the triple border is located.

¹⁸¹Journal notes from border visit and Interviews with South Sudanese and Congolese border officials, 25/09/2019.

Figure 7. The triple border of Salya Musala.



Salya Musala, from the ‘Congolese’ (right) side, looking into Uganda. South Sudan is to the left of the IOM sign. Author’s picture. September 25, 2019.

Today, managing borders such as *Salya Musala*, still not fully demarcated, is left to State and non-state actors from both sides, and who also often find themselves entangled in the conflicts of their neighbours. Communal boundaries had been seldom demarcated during colonial administration, though continue to be locally defined by particular points in the human and natural landscape. *Salya Musala* as one example, takes its name from the three small stony hills one sees, which locals have long claimed are formed in the shape of “three cooking pots”.

These scattered points cannot be neatly joined up by drawing a line (Cormack 2016, Leonardi and Santschi 2016), such as the lines drawn to make up colonial districts and provinces in this region¹⁸², though they have invariably contributed to the creation of new political identities, with the most obvious one being that of the ‘Equatorians’, to group together people whose ethnic or linguistic lines do not coincide with territorial boundaries.

¹⁸²Any attempt to demarcate boundaries continues to be perceived as a threat to some rights, as Leonardi and Santschi (2016) demonstrate of the 2014 boundary dispute between Kajo-Keji and Moyo residents.

4.3.1. Expressions of power in the margins: Oraba/Kaya

“We coordinate between the three countries, we try our best, because is not easy. Congo has no government, the capital is too far, so here, they are not paid salaries, they just survive on their own. Coordinating with someone who is not on the government payroll is difficult. The local chiefs coordinate as the government; whatever they can reap they distribute to these guys managing the borders with Uganda.”

border Security officer, Oraba, 25/09/2019

Attempts to extend State authority to the borderland communities has not guaranteed peace, according to Ugandan border officials interviewed, who detailed scuffles between local authorities and mobile South Sudanese. Over the long-term socio-economic relationships between societies inhabiting Lado, now mostly in the West Nile region, political economies had been built from population movement. Under the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1899-1956), merchants had settled in large numbers all over Yei County, across from Oraba. Numerous soldiers, locally known as *malaki*, stayed in the region after retirement from the army and offered money for produce, which created an incentive for markets that quickly multiplied without official recognition, as it still happens today. The development of a cross-border market economy included large numbers of foreigners and refugees from the 1950s and 1960s civil wars, and whose smuggling activities became key in placing Kaya and Yei markets at the very centre of the economy, and in competition to Juba (El-Rasheed 1984).

Later, the increase of regionalised conflicts from the 1980s, brought armed actors in DRC, Uganda and Sudan into profitable transnational activities through networks with traders and businessmen and transformed the power dynamics across their shared borderlands.¹⁸³ It is from this multi-level layered relationship, assigning unequal expressions of power and authority, but also of mutual solidarity, that any attempt to harden the borders between South Sudan and Uganda is still met with resistance and contestation. The difference, according to the Ugandan border officers, is that the composition of the present population in Yei and Kaya, on the South Sudanese side of the border, is made up of mostly Dinka soldiers, so that “the local population can’t stay there. You will find them dispersed across the three borders.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³Akol discusses the developments in the Maridi and Yei districts in southern Sudan during the early 1980s, that turned cross border trade into a vibrant economic activity. “Those who had spent time in Uganda and Zaïre had often preserved friendships outside Sudan and would use these networks to trade illicitly across the borders” (1994: 90).

¹⁸⁴Chief Police Officer, Oraba, 26/08/2019.

Current changes in the population composition of Kaya, pose a challenge to border officers in the Uganda side of the border in Oraba. Constant frictions between borderland communities and the South Sudanese army for example, have great impact on cross-border mobility and security- especially of displaced South Sudanese fleeing to Uganda, as ‘identity’ is used to claim rights to move, work and live on either side. Managing the control of cross-border movement is thus part of the language and landscape of conflict and responses to conflict along borders drawn arbitrarily through populated areas. To the Oraba police officers, maintaining cordial relationships with South Sudanese civilians and State actors, while also keeping other rebels nearby at bay is prioritised. At the time of the field research, the National Salvation Front (NAS) of Thomas Cirilo was present behind the hills across Kaya. As non-signatories to the current peace agreement, they were said to be highly hostile.

“They attack everyone because they are also not paid. The government army controls Kaya/Oraba border, while rebels are in the rural areas not far”, the officer explained, while pointing toward Kaya, where he said “there are only about 200 people living there at the moment, as everything has been destroyed.” While the South Sudanese army took over Kaya, and soldiers have pillaged the houses, removing the roof, doors and windows to sell them as scraps, NAS and SPLA-IO - which occupied Morobo – both taxed civilians and traders over the right to move inland and back.¹⁸⁵ Multiple expressions of power in this border, and along connecting transport routes, are only partly about claiming territorial control.

¹⁸⁵Journal notes, Oraba, 26/08/2019. This description also fits that of interviews held with displaced South Sudanese interviewed, who passed through this border on their way to the settlements, including some who continue to work as traders. The information however, could not be formally verified, as thus, serves only as anecdotal evidence.

Figure 8. The Oraba-Kaya border.



Author's photograph. August 26, 2019.

To the extent that human mobility can shape State behavior at multiple levels (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015:7), one can argue that both State and non-state actors seek to regularly exercise a 'monopoly on the right to move', where territorial claim serves as a means to tax civilians. Officially, State authority stems from an interest in formulating and apply legal criteria to (re)define the parameters of legitimate movement and civic membership. At the level of everyday experiences and expectations, displaced South Sudanese and Ugandans interact with officials in contexts where law and procedures are either mediated or marginalised by informal interventions, unequal negotiations, and at times, exploitative and coercive exchanges, all of which take place at Oraba/Kaya border. The experiences of displaced South Sudanese are one way in which they come into contact with State officials, regardless of how unhelpful or disruptive these interactions can be. On the other hand, the State decentralisation logic introduced by President Salva Kiir during the course of the conflict, serves as an entry point to the capture and control of the margins, and become an important tool from which the centre tries to build a monopoly over the control of movement, widening thus, the locations in which the politics of mobility takes place, from former colonial borderlands, to refugee and IDP camps, workplaces and along transportation routes. The diversity of the colonial project across space and time had unfolded through notable disagreements, conflict and negotiation

within and between groups, and through economic bricolage.¹⁸⁶ Asymmetries across these borders are found beyond visible markers and can reflect diverging political cultures, administrative capacities and the changing focus from colonialism to capitalism.

“In Kaya there is a checkpoint behind the hill; in Basi there is another, and then in Morobo too. All over Yei. These are meant to be revenue collection points, but as things are not organised, you will find the army, the police, the revenue collectors there. You pay multiple taxes and not all are receipted.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019

Border towns such as Oraba/kaya create economic opportunities for diverse social groups. Transport corridors aim to eliminate the points of friction on which localised dynamics rely, and the relations between towns and corridors that concentrate on the power dynamics and social relations stimulated by both. Displaced South Sudanese then also help shape the relationships between development and cross-border mobility from within Uganda as much as they have been affected by conflict and forced displacement in South Sudan. A recent incident involving a truck allegedly carrying food supplies to SPLA-IO was impounded at this border by URA officials. The police officer gave a discreet version of why the South Sudanese army may be seen to ‘strike the opposition’ with this act; to deprive them of aid, as accusations went on.¹⁸⁷ By extension, this also goes to the many inhabitants in the region automatically classified as opposition supporters. The official walked up to the map hanging from the wall behind his desk and explained why the South Sudanese army disrupts movements through Kaya, while it seeks to channel most goods through Nimule:

“If you see from this side of Oraba/Kaya, the roads can take you to Morobo, Yei, Maridi, all the way up to Barh-al Ghazal. There are a lot of places on the western side of South Sudan, and you can also reach Central Africa and DRC. But from Elegu-Nimule, you only have Juba and Bor, and then Torit and Kapoeta to the East. There is nothing above that because of the swamp and the lack of roads. So, everything now is through Nimule, and security is stronger there because of it too.”

interview, Oraba, 25/09/2019

The take-over of Kaya by the SPLA army in 2017, means that they are now stationed directly opposite Oraba, dictating what and who comes in and out.¹⁸⁸ Although CES is located south of the Nilotic peoples, it is the main gateway to South Sudan from East Africa and the Great

¹⁸⁶Twjistra, 2014.

¹⁸⁷Eye Radio, June 18, 2019. *SPLA-IO negotiating the release of food for troops impounded by Uganda*. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://eyeradio.org/spla-io-negotiating-release-of-food-for-troops-impounded-by-uganda/>. This follows from accusations by a SPLA-IO commander for Amadi state made in the previous week.

¹⁸⁸Sudan Tribune, 2017. SPLF forces gain control of South Sudan’s Kaya town. June 17, 2017. Accessed June 8, 2022. <https://sudantribune.com/article61004/>

Lakes. The northern regions of South Sudan are more difficult to access, especially during the rainy season when the large Bahr el-Ghazal swamps block the roads for several months. Juba, on the other hand, is in CES, the main destination for commercial imports and humanitarian aid, channelled through Elegu/Nimule. There, the presence of the army is robust, as is from the Ugandan side in Elegu, with UPDF soldiers closely monitoring the border. The porous borderland stretches along 435km from the tripoint with Kenya to the east, to the tripoint with DRC to the west, with official demarcation pending at several points. Meanwhile, material signs of the borders have sprung up in the form of the One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) in the Elegu/Nimule border, while other borders continue to barely exist on the ground, such as *Salia Musala*, or the highly utilised unofficial border crossing points, known to transnational communities.

Over the history of cross-border movements between Yei and northern Uganda, and between Morobo and Congo's border at Basi, fundamental changes occurred in the way people negotiate access. Bribes and extra fees have multiplied both at official borders and within in-country roads, and civilians point out that "If you complain about someone who has charged you money, and not given you a receipt, they can kill you".¹⁸⁹ Many settlement residents still engage in cross-border trade also, though they note how their movements are exploited by multiple actors in control of 'promoting' or 'preventing' movement across the borderland.

4.3.2. "We are scattered": South Sudanese split across borders

The act of consolidating a new border and cross-border infrastructure can also change the course of history which has settled on unresolved disputes and inaccuracies of colonial border-making and demarcation.¹⁹⁰ At the same time, borders have been decided in non-material ways: whether through imageries (of the State and its borders), memory, rumour or relationships of solidarity, neither the State nor its citizens can in fact be determined as 'fixed'. The social consequences from cross-border displacement can generate demographic changes in the ethnic composition of towns and villages – and incur high rates of poverty and lack of access to services - while interface negotiations at border crossing points, shapes transnational political economies. As civilians scramble over where to relocate, new mobile categories emerge, and

¹⁸⁹Key Informant Interview, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019.

¹⁹⁰Merkx, 2002. Refugee identities and relief in an African borderland: a study of northern Uganda and southern Sudan, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Volume 21, Issue 1 and 2, April 2002, Pages 113–146. To note, Merkx argued against the likelihood of African borders being further redrawn, which they have been eventually, for Eritrea in 2003, and South Sudan, in 2011.

with that, inequalities are also formed. Some displaceds for example, can easily move between Uganda and South Sudan, where they have opportunities to work and the ability to mobilise resources through their social networks.

“I have a shop in Yei, and the main things we sell, we come and take from Uganda to South Sudan. Sometimes I go to Congo, in Ariwara, to buy goods from there and take it to Yei.”

male South Sudanese, Rhino settlement 12/09/2019

There are those however, confined to the settlements who may comprise of households with little or no resources or social networks to whom they may rely on. Women-led households especially, can indicate that there are further social and economic divisions very particular to each social group, depending on who they are associated with; this may either limit their mobility options or enhance them (see Chapter 5). During flight from South Sudan, it is not uncommon for families to split across different locations and even different countries. While they may avoid moving back to South Sudan for personal security reasons, many access Eastern DRC to check on kin:

“We Africans are scattered. There are those who are in Congo, and others remained in South Sudan, while we are here in Uganda. I can travel to see those in Congo, but not in South Sudan. I never travelled back to South Sudan because the way the soldiers acted in this war, is the worst compared to the previous wars. They are killing civilians. The way the soldiers whom I stayed with, in the trading centre, turned around, was so scaring. That demoralised me and I lost interest completely in going back.”

male South Sudanese, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019

The multidirectional mobility is intense and enabled by the physical layout of the settlements; being on open rural and former ‘hunting grounds’ with no material boundaries. Mobility thus, has no permanent character, but happens in the form of many daily movements that include a lot of interactions with host members (for instance, to sell their produce). People and ideas have always been on the move, though the reasons and means behind these movements have become more complex, as displacement affords new forms of movements and the continuity of mobile patterns (of trade and transportation routes). They also often occur alongside development planning and urbanisation and may be made invisible within the more material forms of State-building.

4.4. *Analysing displacement dynamics*

One such form, came in during the large-scale national and international response to address the South Sudanese displacement. Nine new refugee settlements were opened in Uganda, as well as a network of border collection points, transit and reception centres and a large-scale registration and assistance operation (UNHCR, 2018).¹⁹¹ While most displaced interviewed entered Uganda either through Nimule or Kaya, there are also many who used unofficial crossings. South Sudan's movement patterns have been tracked and recorded by multiple datasets,¹⁹² which more generally try to understand why and how people move, and what happens during these journeys. Long-term cross-border relationships and a shared history through multiple disruptions can thus inform how particular groups are able to mitigate their conditions better than others. Colonial statistical data however, had been poorly developed and left serious effects for the collection of migration data, with minimal value to information gathering on internal and intra-state movement in Africa (Gould 1974). What had been defined under the adage of 'labour migration', amounted to mass expulsions and deportation during the decolonisation and independence movement that swept Africa in the second half of the 20th century. With little legal contestation, newly independent countries claimed to protect sovereignty against 'strangers', the conceptual predecessor of the term migrants.¹⁹³ In this way, thousands of African migrants were dispossessed and expelled across borders since the late 1950s.

Against this background, the mapping of contemporary displacement and movement in South Sudan suffers from limited data. A recent baseline survey data, conducted to track down movement patterns across time and space in South Sudan, admitted that "Given that exact numbers of population movements were not consistently available throughout primary or secondary data collection, movement routes could not be weighted by size of population moving; only routes frequently of use, when indicated in separate years, could be calculated." (REACH 2022:9). To add to these challenges, alternatives routes such as passing through another country to access Uganda, in this case, is not widely recorded. Conversely, the DRC –

¹⁹¹These were Maaji III, Pagarinya, Agojo, Bidibidi, Palorinya, Imvepi, two separate sites within Rhino Camp settlement, and Palabek. ODI, 2017. *Refugee Response in Northern Uganda*. Accessed June 4, 2022. <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12595.pdf>

¹⁹²In particular by IOM-DTM, REACH, UNHCR and IDMC reports on displacement in South Sudan.

¹⁹³Skinner, 1963 "Strangers in West African Societies". The literature at the time was not concerned with whether migration was internal or external, thus the shifting mood against migrants categorised them as 'strangers' rather than 'foreigners'. Also see Alan Dowty (1986) "Emigration and expulsion in the Third World".

where it borders both South Sudan and Uganda – has served as a diversion route from which civilians have used to avoid running into rebels and the South Sudanese army.¹⁹⁴ The FGD in Koboko with displaced South Sudanese from the Kakwa have reinforced close proximity among the group split between the three borders. A key informant among the group of urban refugees explained their ability to mobilise their cross-border social networks:

“Since we have this relationship with Uganda, when there is war, we know we are safe if we come here. Those from the side of Yei, they just enter Congo as a route to come to this side of Uganda. We know that when we come here, we will be safe, that’s why we came here”.

South Sudanese male, Koboko, 26/08/2019

Since the December 2013 fallout in Juba, the conflict-induced displacement also exacerbated food production and increased the need for people to adapt to longer periods of insecurity, often by way of continuous movement. Many in this group who reside in Koboko town, are registered in one of the Ugandan settlements, where once a month they collect their food ration, while they also perform occasional trips to South Sudan. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2017) found that new patterns of displacement emerged due to the porous borders and poor coordination between the neighbouring countries, leading to circular cross-border displacement, in which people move back and forth between South Sudan and neighbouring countries when they are unable to find safety, food or other basic necessities. Meanwhile, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Monitoring (DTM) issued its first dataset for South Sudan in 2018, covering the period between January 2016 – December 2017.¹⁹⁵ The Protection of Civilians sites (PoCs) which emerged immediately following the December 15, 2013, standoff in Juba, have become more of a permanent residency for hundreds of thousands IDPs. The role of PoCs has since shaped and changed the daily internal movements, access to services and security in the areas where they are found, and have thus, become integrated to the wider urban structure. The government on the other hand, has made continuous efforts to shut them down on the grounds that it is safe for the displaced to return to their own communities.¹⁹⁶ From the onset of the conflict, worried about the possibility of opposition forces sheltering in the PoCs, Salva Kiir has shown less concern over the humanitarian catastrophe and instead, argued

¹⁹⁴Notes from FGD in Koboko, and general notes from interviews conducted at four borders between Uganda and DRC, which took place from August to November 2019.

¹⁹⁵Tracks and monitors displacement and population mobility, whether on site or *en route*. By October 2016

¹⁹⁶Radio Tamazuj, 2016. Government plans to shut down UN protection sites in Juba, 19 December 2016.

Accessed February 12, 2022. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/govt-plans-to-shut-down-un-protection-sites-in-juba-official>. The pressure to shut down POCs had in fact been widely said to enable officials to better monitor and control both the displaced and the aid they receive (CRSF 2018:8).

that UNIMSS had dishonoured its agreed mandate toward infrastructure and institutional building, by turning focus on the displaced populations, as if the staggering numbers constitute an inconsequential impact of State-making to the wider population.¹⁹⁷ This new scenario implies that mobility patterns have changed, with new routes also “representing a shift from micro-displacement to farther and longer-term displacement, especially for vulnerable households.” (REACH, 2020:6). Many research participants came from the South Sudanese states bordering Sudan such as Upper Nile, mostly after a stint with internal displacement in one of the PoCs. Theirs, is a situation turned more precarious given the ‘traditional’ ethnic composition of northern Uganda.

4.4.1. Finding refuge as the ‘other’ in the community: limitations to *multi-site living*

After the 2015 presidential order increased the number of states from 10 to 28, Upper Nile found itself isolated. An area heavily populated by ethnic Dinka and Shilluk, saw displacement between 2015 and in 2018 cause farmers and labourers to flee to Sudan in search for casual labour jobs (REACH, 2018b).¹⁹⁸ From April 2018, periodic border closures by the Sudanese government led to food price shocks, as supplies dwindled, and informal cross-border trade began to incur heavy surcharges. Rural areas were rendered uninhabitable after destructive attacks, and many have left to seek refuge southwards, suggesting that the chronology of events made one type of mobility (to Sudan) be replaced by another (to Uganda). What is interesting about the observation of a *multi-site living* strategy taking place, and one which makes it problematic, is the fact that not all South Sudanese who fled to Uganda are part of the common cross-border community. There seems to be no wider acknowledgement either – and solutions - about the harassment, isolation and general exclusion of ethnic Dinka, Murle, and some Nuer and Shilluk in the Ugandan settlements, as shown in examples on Chapter 5 and 6.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, a Focus Group Discussion with six elderly South Sudanese in the Mungula settlement, all originally from Upper Nile state in South Sudan, highlights such conditions.²⁰⁰ They had left

¹⁹⁷Reuters, 2014. “*South Sudan’s Kiir concerned by UN civilian protection focus*”. September 17, 2014. Accessed June 11, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-un-assembly-southsudan-idUKKCN0HM0NC20140927>

¹⁹⁸Aside the conflict, the Padang Dinka and the Shilluk have claimed Malakal as their own and pursue administrative control of the state capital; thus, the root of Shilluk displacement is found more to do with local land disputes, rather than the nation-wide conflict. (Craze, 2018).

¹⁹⁹This reflects the groups in which I have interacted with and who have experienced isolation due to their ethnicity. To illustrate the limited knowledge on the matter, ACCORD has only briefly mentioned the conflicts that spiked in June 2018 in Bidibidi and Rhino, between Dinka and other refugees and host communities. See Accord, February 11, 2019. “*Conflict dynamics*”. Accessed June 10, 2022. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/conflict-dynamics-in-the-bidibidi-refugee-settlement-in-uganda>

²⁰⁰FGD, Mungulla settlement, 05/11/2019.

with a government plane to Juba after the attacks of January 2014 devastated Malakal and were among the first groups to arrive in the Ugandan settlements. They opposed the 2011 referendum, especially because Upper Nile borders Sudan and “looks more to trade and relationships with the North.” Having fled to Uganda, they feel like ‘aliens’ in the southern borderland region and lament the relative exclusionary treatment from groups that represent the general ethno-linguistic composition in this region. A common agreement among the group is also centred on the loss of livelihoods and the precarity of their condition as refugees in Uganda.

“The life is not totally different here, but we are not citizens in Uganda. We are just refugees, and refugees don’t have any instance where you can go and dig anywhere. Because you can stay where NGOs haven given you a plot and cultivate in that small plot. The difference is that we don’t own any land that we can go and cultivate.”

FGD, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019

Being so far away from their home, makes it more difficult to find work or to access farmland, services and even socialise with kin who might live within a shorter distance across the border, in a way that those displaced from Greater Equatoria can. The general premise sustains that mobility must be interpreted as more than simply moving from one place to another; a cultural perception about mobility is also important for a close reading of people’s own understandings about the places and spaces in which they move, and with that, the kind of experiences these movements afford.

The humanitarian intervention (both in Uganda and South Sudan) may have been useful in saving lives during the initial phase of the emergency, although it cannot meet the needs of the majority of those in protracted displacement situations, once this has moved beyond a temporary ‘threshold’, and with no solutions in the foreseeable future.²⁰¹ And as the borderland undergoes important development changes in trade, economy and infrastructure, so are the northern Ugandan settlements in need to be counted as part of this process, and by extension, integrated to the State-making process of South Sudan, which depends on access to the East African community. The very elasticity of displacement shows effects far beyond the visible security and livelihoods variable (i.e. poor living conditions in host country, or coping strategies such as consuming less food). What happens in between transactions and the

²⁰¹Araya, 2013. State Fragility, Displacement and development interventions, in Forced Migration Review. Accessed June 23, 2022. <https://www.fmreview.org/fragilestates/araya#>

apparent ‘immobility’ of affected communities is significant to measure the durability of displacement, and the South Sudanese State has to revise its ‘exclusionary’ approach with regards to citizens it classifies as deviant. After all, as Quirk and Vigneswaran believe that - however in broad terms - “mobility and political struggles of belonging and defining the nation have gone hand in hand for decades, which means migration biographies are important signifiers of belonging” (2015:79-81).

Yet, the relationship between internal and cross-border displacement shows that the connection is still poorly understood.²⁰² This can better inform how and why people are compelled to move back and forth between multiple localities, and in turn provide valuable insights into the longevity of displacement, in consideration to local economies that thrive on conditions of ‘inclusionary exclusion’ (Hagman and Korf 2012). The borderland in this case, is not only a periphery to the centre, but also an area where disorder is internalised into the body of the sovereign State through the state of exception.²⁰³ Within this, displacement assumes a more dynamic approach, such as “enforced changes in the interweaving spatial, social and symbolic conditions and relations” (Hammar 2014:9). It is then possible to identify a range of social and economic spaces inhabited by displaced communities, and where the imposition of borderland management and control prompts the emergence of new types of relationships between the State and their diverse societies.

4.5. The Greater Equatoria displacement as State design

During the 2013-2020 conflict, new assertions about ethnic boundaries were produced, and emphasised local investment in both internal and international borders by the South Sudanese government. Upon my arrival at Bidibidi in September 2019, things moved very quickly in terms of ‘following the story’ among the displaced community in zone 1. One key informant, Edward, a senior South Sudanese, mentioned a letter he wanted to show me, which is said to detail the plans for the systematic displacement of Equatorian people. Others I have met also made consistent references to the letter’s content, albeit carefully choosing a firm position. I read a copy of the ‘minutes’ taken from a so-called secret meeting held between president Kiir and members of the *Jieng*²⁰⁴ council of Elders, dated from August 22, 2018, in which they

²⁰² IDCM portal. Internal to Cross Border Displacement. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/research-areas/internal-to-cross-border-displacement>

²⁰³ As explored by Agamben, 1998.

²⁰⁴ In Dinka dialect, *Jieng* is the name assigned to the Nilotic ethnic and linguistic group.

discuss the planned displacement of Equatorians, the disarming of non-Dinka in the army and intelligence services, and the economic deprivation of civilians, among other things (Appendix A, pp 206).²⁰⁵ To the settlement population and beyond, these news widely spread on local South Sudanese online media.²⁰⁶ Although some of its contents allude to factual events that did occur, much of it seems to have come out of anecdotal evidence contributing to the tensions between civilians and the central government, and between displaced and host communities in Uganda. The situation had already been difficult by ethnic rhetoric underway to promote a ‘us vs them’ narrative, as consistent reports were made since 2013.²⁰⁷ Greater consequences are added when rumours that spread false information sprung out from key events, and the actions taken based on them ends up validating elite’s intention to expel others at any cost. Equatorians have become dehumanised in the eyes of the government, as to justify violence in the region, especially around Yei during 2016.

A 2017 UNMISS report identified “letters written by Dinka individuals and Dinka youth groups” that were circulated in October and November 2016 threatening Equatorians, after a series of targeted incidents that resulted in the loss of residents including Dinka, who felt particularly targeted.²⁰⁸ Interviewees also remembered the time in 2008, where Madi and Dinka communities clashed in Nimule because Dinka have settled and refused to leave when returnees from the war wanted their lands back. From this period, some of those displaced from within the region attribute the escalation of ethnicised violence to those earlier clashes. “The Dinka-Bor are generally cattle-herders, while the Ma’di are mainly farmers. An increased presence of cattle in and around Nimule has made farming impossible, the Ma’di said.”²⁰⁹ A former Nuer army officer interviewed, left the country in 2017 after being tipped off by a colleague in Juba, that non-Dinka were being threatened by fellow members within the military and political wing.²¹⁰ He had initially resisted, though began to feel the danger when he was robbed of his SPLA vehicle at gunpoint, on what he suspected was a “push to force me out”. His and Edward’s views also suggest that ethnic rhetoric, despite powerful, have not hold neatly. Because of the

²⁰⁵ For information about the Jieng, see UN, S2016/793. Available at: <https://undocs.org/S/2016/793>

²⁰⁶ Reprisals against Dinka were also voiced by Equatorian youth. The same contents of the letter handed to me can be found on an article by South Sudan Liberty. “*It is time for Dinka to leave Equatoria*”, October 16, 2016. Accessed June 7, 2022. www.southsudanliberty.com/news/index.php/latestnews/1302-it-is-time-for-dinka-to-leave-equatoria-and-now

²⁰⁷ Thiong, 2018. How the politics of fear generated chaos in South Sudan, in *African Affairs*, Volume 117, Issue 469, October 2018, p 613–635. Accessed June 25, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ady031>

²⁰⁸ UNMISS report, January 2017.

²⁰⁹ Interview, displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 28/10/2019.

²¹⁰ Interview, Bidibidi settlement, 07/09/2019

politicisation of ethnicity promoted by the elite, narratives tend to be limited to a binary discussion of Nuer versus Dinka.

Research participants identified a series of events which spread in the region, causing fear as households decided to leave on the basis of ‘not knowing who will be targeted next’. As if taking their cue from the contents of the letter Edward showed me, interviewees pointed to familiar incidents they have experienced and cited these as credible examples of ‘plans to eliminate all Equatorians’. In a tactic to further undermine support for the opposition groups accused of hiding among civilians in CES, house-to-house searches indeed spread quickly during 2016-2017, causing cross-border displacement to increase.

“In Morobo, my neighbour was taken in the night when the government soldiers came to his home calling out his name. They took him and killed him. His family was taken and threatened not to say anything. We found his body by the roadside. There was shooting all around and the children were crying, so we went to sleep in the bush. We agreed to run away.”

male South Sudanese, Bidibidi settlement, 7/12/2019

A situation of generalised fear has made many residents who fled to northern Ugandan settlements, distrust both members of host communities and fellow displaced individuals. Silence is applied to avoid being accused of betraying fellow neighbours and collaborating with armed actors, according to my interviewee. He added that the situation in the settlements remains tense, as the South Sudanese government engages people who can access the Ugandan settlements to obtain information about possible ‘rebel supporters’:

“There is information going around about government soldiers asking civilians to give out names of men rumoured to support or belong to SPLA-IO. They come to you and say, ‘I need 10 names and I can give you \$500’. Now, that is a lot of money, so the person writes down a list of names. They would then go after the people and kill them”.

Situations such as these are not limited by the international border. Because of the massive influx of Equatorian communities to Uganda, rumours about GOSS soldiers showing up in person, or sending spies to the settlements (Chapter 6.2.1), have gathered enough credibility to discipline individuals, especially those associated with the government, into silence. Perhaps one of the most inflammatory pieces of information described in the letter, is the framing of ‘to whom the land belongs to’, with the claim that Equatorians are “foreigners”, in need to be “sent back to their places”, as “Dinka are the owners of this land”. Hence, even as extensive oral and

written history may show otherwise, the boundaries between what is real and what is imagined have become very thin in popular political language.

4.6. South Sudan's decentralisation and the question of state borders

In 2005, the provisions for the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan turned the previously known southern areas of Bhar al Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile into 10 states upon South Sudan's independence. At the time, this was interpreted as adhering to either of the two approaches in dealing with current and past attempts to resolve or control violent conflict: to enforce separation, or to enforce proximity. The two approaches describe how debates about governing post-war South Sudan are deeply rooted in experiences of north-south/south-north migration, of displacement and of movement restrictions in its State making processes. Overtime, these also became largely associated with corresponding ethnic geographical divisions. As the result of the presidential decree in 2015, which saw the number of states increase to 28, Central Equatoria State was re-divided into three states of Terekeka, Juba (renamed Jubek), and Yei River State. As if repeating Sudan's colonial legacy, the new states reflected "majority" ethnic groups of those considered indigenous to those areas.²¹¹ The provocative policies by Salva Kiir during the course of the conflict, proposed by the *Jieng* council of Elders and supported by political figures such as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Michael Makuei, created greater divisions within the fragile government system.²¹² In general, the move has received international condemnation as it directly violated the peace agreement.²¹³ At the local level, territorially-based notions of identity and belonging turned into frequent inter-communal confrontations. Long debates and practices on how to divide South Sudan administratively shows just how intensely political and stratified decision-making has become in the region (Badiy, 2014), although not a recent phenomenon in the governance type of South Sudan.

²¹¹South Sudan Nation, January 15, 2019. Accessed May 29, 2022.

<http://southsudannation.com/ethnic-balance-with-42-increased-dinka-land-if-28-states-approved/>

²¹²Radio Tamazuj, "Less Than Two-Thirds of S. Sudan Parliament Members Vote to Approve 28 States Proposal," November 19, 2015. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/less-23-s-sudan-parliament-membersvote-approve-28-states-proposal>; James Butty, "South Sudan Rebels Condemn Creation of 28 New States," Voice of America News, October 5, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-rebels-condemn-creation-of-28-newstates/2991681.html>

²¹³Sudan Tribune, October 12, 2015. 'IGAD says president Salva Kiir violates peace agreement'. Accessed 10 January 2021, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article56708>

The 2017 order by president Salva Kiir to create 32 states, added a new dynamic during the conflict which precisely emphasised territorially based identities.²¹⁴ However, rather than resulting in any administrative efficiency, the proposed borders sparked disputes that quickly spread, along with a new layer of violence.²¹⁵ Zoe Cormack's assessment on "Borders are Galaxies" (2016) which addresses Gogrial's Dinka land disputes and the question of internal borders is an excellent example of the kind of narrative dynamics that are shaped by modern interpretations on what it takes to assert identity, power and inclusion, where "Dinka pastoralists have invested in boundaries as a mean to define and assert political authority and inclusion in the State" (2016:2). External projects of control become inscribed on local geographies, landscapes and communities, and as such, these projects become part of the local geopolitical landscape, whether as appropriated administrative structures or the organisation of public authority. The peripheries of South Sudan, and of other countries with similar characteristics, can thus be analysed by the continuous interplay between the State and societies found 'at the margins', whether internal or external. Peripheries are not a 'blank slate', when their politics become scripted against the background of earlier entanglements of different geographies, including the Lado Enclave, which today lies mostly in Uganda's West Nile region. By extension, policy changes and shocks that are often forgotten or considered irrelevant during the civil war, become visible. The policy environment is a critical component of livelihood systems that depend upon the movement of people and livestock. South Sudan's consolidation is historically tied to issues of border demarcation, leaving important questions open. An ODI (2015) paper for example, has called into question whether the internal division of states creates more violence or the other way around. As for the South Sudan – Uganda boundaries, Leonardi's meticulous study of the 2014 Moyo-Kajo Keji boundary affirms the conflict in South Sudan as having "reignited a call for clear boundary demarcation between Moyo and Kajo Keji" (2020). In view of these developments, it seems logical to address the association between mobility and displacement with disordinate efforts to demarcate boundaries along ethnic lines, and the dangerous consequences of imagining further the development of a State in this context.

²¹⁴Sudan Tribune, "South Sudan president expands states to 28 as opposition accuses him of deal violation", October 2, 2015. Accessed 14 April 2022, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article56581>;
Sudan Tribune, "South Sudanese cabinet approves creation of 28 states", October 14, 2015. Accessed January 10, 2016. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article56709>

²¹⁵Radio Voice of Hope, 2015. 'New states border dispute leaves dozens dead, several wounded in Tonj', October 12, 2015. Accessed May 4, 2022. <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/18968>

The security of South Sudanese has been threatened by the transfer of powerful individuals drawing from the president's ethnic group throughout the country. Violence-induced displacement has been recorded in vast areas populated mostly by Shilluk in Malakal, Nuer in Ruweng state, and, in the ethnically diverse state of Lol.²¹⁶ As a result, land disputes have increased, compounded by the 2015 government order to form 28 states, and later in 2017, 32 states. The collective grievances recorded during field research, indicate familial and intra-group ruptures charged on 'ethnic conflicts', though in reality, are about the unbalanced power dynamics within the politico-military circles, who often pit one community against another, as a symptom of how the State-building logic has been oversimplified by the South Sudanese.²¹⁷

4.6.1. The implications of the new state boundaries in South Sudan

"The decree introducing more states is part of the corruption. Instead of developing the existing 10 states, the government went to create 32, when there are no roads connecting areas in South Sudan, no resources spent on improving the existing states. It contradicts the process."

displaced pastor from Kajo Keji, Bidibidi settlement 07/12/2019

The internal boundaries brought new complications to issues of identity and territories that are fundamental to determine how landownership claims are made and access is regulated. The way in which boundaries between communities are negotiated, led to the erosion of traditional and institutionalised channels. "They [SPLA soldiers] buy it [land] from the chiefs and from the desperate people. They divided that place which is now empty, and some chiefs sold it to the people, even without papers."²¹⁸

As a result, those displaced are often viewed as the 'enemy', either through their association with an insurgent group, an opposing political or ideological affiliation, or more generally with an ethnic, cultural, religious or social group considered inferior or threatening.²¹⁹ When

²¹⁶Craze, 2019. *Displaced and Immiserated: The Shilluk of Upper Nile in South Sudan's Civil War*, 2014–19. Small Arms Survey, September 2019. Accessed April 12, 2022.

<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/HSBA-Report-South-Sudan-Shilluk.pdf>

²¹⁷Jok Madut, on commenting about South Sudan's "lost decade", declared "The South Sudanese themselves oversimplified what it takes to build a state", on Financial Times, South Sudan's Wasted Decade, August 26, 2021. Accessed June 30, 2022. <https://www.ft.com/content/5c8041a4-10af-4950-8502-87ff75a5438b>

²¹⁸Interview with displaced female from Yei, Bidibidi settlement, 07/09/2019. During the course of fieldwork, several South Sudanese and Ugandans mentioned the careless and desperate habit of selling land and property assumed to be 'abandoned' by fleeing civilians, the scale of which remains unknown.

²¹⁹See Deng, F. M., 'Internal displacement: a challenge of peace, security, and nation building', ed. K. Cahill, *Emergency Relief Operations* (Fordham University Press and Center for International Health and Cooperation: New York, 2003), p.119.

governments become directly involved in uprooting civilians, they often see those they are uprooting not as their citizens but as ‘aliens’. This process of dehumanisation enables authorities to more easily explain away the high number of those killed or uprooted. Kindersley (2012) acknowledges that the trend towards monitored, enforced public political loyalty is not new in South Sudan, though it has hardened and broadened by independence and the renewed wars and conflicts inside the State.²²⁰ One might see in that, how the idea of a distinct concept of South Sudanese national loyalty has been used to justify oppression by the central government. The pastor who criticised the additional states went on to suggest “the government wants to take out people from Yei, Laynia, Morobo and Kajo Keji so they can take over the land”. Such views are part of the popular knowledge that is spread over the years and will require careful analysis on the links between identity and territory. So far, they seem firmly forged through the policy environment introduced by Kiir and enhanced by the vacuum created in the context of displacement, which will lead to continuing disputes over land rights and access. As the pastor concluded,

“In order for people to reclaim their lands, it will be difficult because the courts are corrupt: you pay money to ask the court to help your case and they forge a paper. So now the rightful owner has no paper because this is ancestral land, and the one who stole it paid to have a paper. The court would ask for evidence which you as the rightful owner don’t have.”

The South Sudanese exodus accelerated with the expansion of the conflict in July 2016 until the end of 2017, when about 1.6 million people left the country and moved mainly to Uganda. Beyond such mass scale uprooting of civilians, the general food security status of South Sudan declined accordingly and alerted on famine-like conditions in several states. The initial wave of displacement left the traditionally cereal surplus producing areas of Central and Eastern Equatoria states with an exodus of about 670.000 people in 2017, sharply reducing the number of households engaged in farming activities. In the following year, the refugee caseload remained firm at around 2.48 million people (FAO, 2019:10). The impact caused by the creation of additional states exacerbated both internal and external displacement, turning people more dependent on markets. Ultimately, the use of coercive displacement as a method to construct a State built around directing the movement of people away from access to their

²²⁰Kindersley, 2012. “Traitors, Sell-outs and Political Loyalty in the New State of South Sudan”, p41-44, in *Year One of a Nation: South Sudan’s Independence*. E-International Relations, December 2012. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/wp-content/uploads/Sudan-publication.pdf>

livelihoods, generates questions about the viability of the South Sudanese State. In the context where multi-site everyday mobilities both continue and emerge as new patterns, the agency of displaced South Sudanese (O’Byrne and Ogeno,2020; Vancluysen,2021) is important for the ability to adapt and apply strategies to carve out a living under uncertainty. Approaching the experience of displacement as a form of movement, integrated into the lifecycle of the borderland, creates opportunities to better understand how South Sudanese engage and resist the State. It also provides a window from which the recent histories of boundary demarcation have contributed to changes in the character of the South Sudanese State in relation to its neighbours and its own population.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I set the groundwork for a view to the South Sudanese State from the borderlands with Uganda, as an entry point to argue how the contemporary margins acquire theoretical purchase as sites where State-making process takes place. I attempted to show that mobility, displacement (internal and cross-border) and State-making have important historical connections, continuities, along efforts that seek to contour the dangers of stocking frictions among ethnic groups dispersed across internal and external boundaries. Post-independence South Sudan had been a battle ground for the construction of its identity; one being enforced through technical understandings of State-building, and the other being contested and resisted by various identity groups who have forged for themselves, an argument of territorial belonging. We see the continuities in the history of the South Sudanese – Ugandan borderland mirrored in the contemporary imaginary framing of Greater Equatoria as ‘Dinka land’, and the demonisation by the centre of those assumed ‘aliens’. The historical approach to State-making, the emergence of borders and dynamic mobility patterns tells us that the composition of the territories have also changed; the unresolved border delimitation paved the way for multiple sources of contestation over ‘to whom the land belongs to’, as civilians rebuild and adapt to opportunities and limitations that result from physical dislocation.

Mobility on the other hand, is a key component in discourses about migratory systems and immigration controls, with established international mechanisms to help in the management and distribution of the rights of freedom of movement. How exactly does it infer opportunities or limitations to displaced South Sudanese is however, not well understood. The flow, frequency and intensity of population movement between internal and cross-border

displacement creates overtime, new local structures of livelihoods and governance, which in turn, attracts power actors with an eye to profit from the situation. Both the civil war and pockets of localised violence in South Sudan have separated a much larger number of South Sudanese from their land. And as an orchestrated State-design, this displacement can impart long-term societal transformation, including asymmetrical borderland economies, on which revenues are captured by the State and non-state actors.

CHAPTER 5

Like Assets on the Move: violence and displacement

5.1. Introduction

“The problem was that the Equatorians did not want to take sides in this war. How can we fight when we are dying because of the SPLA? If I join Riek, it means I am going to kill those on the side of Kiir, and if I join the government, I am going to kill my brother, Riek. This brought fear, and accusations that if you don’t want to fight, you are siding with the rebels. If you see some government people here in the settlements, they just left because they don’t want to choose a side.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/19

This chapter is centred on the perspectives of displaced South Sudanese about the current conflicts²²¹, and the changes it has brought to them through the mass displacement. They include male and female members of multiple ethno-linguistic backgrounds, who originate from different parts of South Sudan and recount the conditions that inflict deep changes to research participants views about South Sudan, its leaders and how they adapt to a debilitating situation. Though these accounts are varied, and some no doubt informing group bias based on shared experiences of violence and dispossession, they nonetheless provide a window from which to examine the status of displacement at a peculiar time when South Sudan conflict parties aim to achieve a government of unity. A development which contrasts much with clear ‘divide and rule’ strategies employed by conflict parties. More precisely, the widening of the conflict landscape to the Equatorian region during 2016²²² has had a direct effect on Uganda, who receives the bulk of displaced population, and it is singled out as the key destination for South Sudanese. The question this chapter seeks to address, is **how do South Sudanese embrace the opportunities and deal with the limitations created by the displacement?**

Research participants still evoke their close ties to Uganda that precedes colonialism and the formation of their separate States, making their stories here presented, a continuation to the preceding chapter – micro-cases within a broader view of borderlands’ sub-regions- as places where violence, the economy and governance structures of one side, influence what happens

²²¹It is necessary to note that many conflicts take place among social groups at different locales within South Sudan, and also its borders with neighbouring countries. As some of my interviewees emphasised, not everyone has fled South Sudan because of the main ‘Kiir vs Riek’ conflict.

²²²Over 200,000 civilians were forced out from greater Equatoria between July and October 2016, while another 120,000 Equatorians were estimated to be displaced internally. See OCHA 2016. “*Humanitarian bulletin South Sudan*”.

on the other side (UNDP 2020). First-hand accounts and observations combined, to describe a situation of “*multi-site living*”, resulting from this strand of research extending from the previous chapter. Finally, the chapter also addresses the challenges of collecting data within an evolving security situation. Although the borderland area may not be characterised as a conflict zone, the oral accounts in the context of violence and displacement thus help situate and frame the condition of displacement within discourses of everyday violent State-making processes.

5.2. “History is repeating itself”: War and displacement to Uganda

Many South Sudanese find themselves today in a situation of repeated displacement, with some having fled the country for the third time. As the situation unfolded in late 2019, individual and collective accounts were often emotionally charged, in response to particular events, it became clear that the ‘ghosts of 1991’ still haunt the memories of those who lived through previous periods of dislocation. Fast forward to 2011, the process of “creating South Sudan from scratch” through a referendum had been on every headline. Though it is another situation entirely once you sit in front of a South Sudanese, whose life has been negatively impacted in every way, from the outcome of January 9, 2011. During the initial month of field research, I began to capture local conceptualisations, about what independence meant, retrospectively.

“The reason why we wanted to separate was to become a peaceful country, so that everyone would stay in their own place. And now, there is a contention that other tribes are moving in, and they also need to be separated. It seems like history is repeating itself.”

displaced female, Rhino settlement, 29-08-2019

The notion of assigning group identity to a specific territory, inherited from the colonial obsession with territorial mapping – and the extension to tribal categorisations - echoes on contemporary discursive claims over identity and belonging. The source of claim lies precisely on the numerous proposals for how South Sudan should be internally divided. In reality, the political language is much to blame for how groups turn against one another, also scripted from the State’s logic to assume State-making as a ‘blank slate’. Once the excitement over the building of infrastructure and an efficient bureaucracy disappeared, people began to question also their perceptions of the State. To counter the above view, other interviewees offered a more candid admission about the outcome of secession from Sudan, saying that “It was good to create South Sudan, but now we wish we would go back to being one Sudan.” Despite the general agreement that “it was good to get rid of Khartoum’s regime”, those whose lives had

also been split between the northern capital and the southern region, now lamented the loss of better conditions in South Sudan, even in comparison to what they had under Sudanese rule.

No doubt the borders and margins, along with imageries of a State in construction have been part of a large body of studies about the State, and State-society relationships (Johnson, 2010; Leonardi, 2013, 2020; Leonardi et. al 2021; Felix da Costa, 2016; Frham,2018). While the new leaders of South Sudan may have sought to forge a legible society according to their own terms, secession has not prevented individuals and groups' forming their own expectations about what kind of State and society would come to constitute South Sudan. When presented with the notion of peace as the equivalent to the formation of territorially bounded ethnic 'settling', I thought about my interviewee's sentence, and wondered whether she thought herself repeating the old mantra that for so long divided north and south sentiment. Her frustration was in fact, directed at "government soldiers brought in from different parts of the country" and who exercised "authority over the local chiefs", with their weapons, which may well represent to local communities, a breakdown of power structures, of representation, protection and a sense of 'losing one's place'. Partly because of the conflict dynamics and the perceived political affiliation of ethnic groups, this narrative continues in the southern territory, transplanted to the heterogeneous societies, where 'history repeats itself', and violence serves as a point of reference from which interviewees paid particular interest. Some invoked the modernisation of methods used to attack and kill civilians:

"In the previous war you would see only guns used. Civilians were able to hide in the bush and not being followed or targeted. Now, the armed men use pangas to cut, poles to beat, guns to kill and other things to kill people. There are many ways to kill people now. With a panga they can enter your house at night and cut you. People are followed in the bush if they try to run."

displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 07/12/2019

These conceptualisations about State-society relationships were necessary as a point of departure to most interviews and informal communications over six months of fieldwork, as they formed the basis of individual and collective memories of violence and displacement in South Sudan. Later in the chapter (5.6), the above formulation serves as a reminder of Nordstrom's (2004) "everydayness of violence", and how it can reform societies inhabiting violent contexts. I consider this to be equally implicated in how South Sudanese evaluate the opportunities and limitations brought by displacement, through the strategy of multi-site living.

More broadly, this opens up enquiries about the notion of a social contract, through the paradox of displacement and State-making in the region.

5.2.1. Displacement in South Sudan, development in northern Uganda

It became clear when people began to come to Uganda, and the government started to bring animals to Equatoria. In the houses people built, the SPLA entered and started saying 'this is my house'. People suspected all along that these killings were on purpose so that we leave the country. Because if I am not around, and you come and take over, I would think you chased me out because you want to take over my place. That is in the minds of everyone from the Equatorias here; that the Dinkas want us to leave so that they take over. That's why other people are so bitter now and want to fight.

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 30-10-19

The violence that continues not far from the relative safety of the settlements makes men especially, uncomfortable. Some avoid details about what happened to their areas, because it makes them want to seek revenge. A key informant from the Ma'di in Loa (CES) also sees the presence of cattle in Equatoria as a sign of 'foreign' encroachment on their land.²²³ In context, incursions around Southern Unity state in 2015/16 resulted in the mass displacement of local communities, as government soldiers and allied militias captured cattle who were then driven to the raiders' areas or driven by senior officers down to Juba for sale. As military offensives escalated in Equatoria in 2017, the land abandoned by the fleeing population enabled Dinka pastoralists, on government's approval, to graze their cattle on the land, aggrieving the local population. Incitement from both Equatorian and Bar-al-Ghazal youths followed, pitting government supported militias and gangs against opposition youth ones. The excesses from the July 2016 violence, a key point in the conflict, were such that some military and political figures who had been close to president Kiir, broke the silence and parted ways.²²⁴ President Kiir however, during a speech later in October 19, 2016, asked SPLM party members, "If Nuers have left with Riek Machar and Equatorians have refused to join the army, how should I get other people to join the army?", in an attempt to justify the unleashing of the army and

²²³ Interview with South Sudanese male, Pagirinya settlement, 06/11/2019. Clashes have been persistent after the July 2016 violence, most notably between cattle keepers and pastoralists. See also Reliefweb (2017) "Widespread Conflict between Dinka and non-Dinka in the Equatorias", accessed July 3, 2022.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/widespread-conflict-between-dinka-and-non-dinka-equatorias>

²²⁴A notable example is the deputy chief of general staff of SPLA, Lt. Gen. Bapiny Mantuil Wicjang Wuor's resignation letter dated October 7, 2016. UNSC Nov. 15, 2016, pp7.

militias to the region, after failing to draw support from the population. Forced recruitment remained rampant however, with cross-border incursions that continued throughout 2021.²²⁵ The violence transcends the physical borderland and remains part of a segmented timeline that ties together the sub-national contexts and displaced communities. The sight of Bidibidi settlement alone, during the mass influx of 1 million South Sudanese in 2017 encapsulates more vividly, how history seems to be repeating itself for many South Sudanese. In October 2019, Rachel, a South Sudanese from Morobo, welcomed me to the grounds of a ‘training centre’ she had built. Having just returned from the US where she works to raise funds to help her fellow displaced South Sudanese, Rachel’s own experience with multiple displacements are still fresh. In 2016, she had returned to Morobo, intending to stay and help the community, until a month later, the current conflict reached Yei and surrounding areas, and people began to flee by their thousands, she said. The chairs, tables and many other items that were meant to furnish a centre in Morobo are now here in Uganda, offering training and accommodation to visitors, NGO and government workers, for a fee so they can invest in the area. South Sudanese like Rachel are among few, who manage to mobilise resources to create more permanent structures that cater to the displaced community. During my time here, I interacted with local NGO workers and settlement residents who often come for meetings and workshops held by Ugandan and international NGOs, South Sudanese entities visiting their communities, and journalists covering stories about the humanitarian crisis. A great deal of information of various kinds reached me each time I stayed in Bidibidi.

Figure 9. Rachel’s training centre in Bidibidi



Author’s photograph, Bidibidi settlement, September 2019.

²²⁵New Vision, 2021. “*South Sudan soldiers accused of recruiting Ugandans*”. March 20, 2021. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/articledetails/95320> . Accessed July 7, 2022. Also see Gidron, 2022. “*Mobile Livelihoods.*”

The centre allowed me to interact and observe the life and the experiences of those displaced by the conflict, from a more privilege angle. Being placed within Bidibidi and hosted by displaced South Sudanese who became assistants, friends, and companions during my walks around zone 1, made it possible for me to observe how this part of the settlement undergoes infrastructural and socio-economic changes. The composition of the households in is overwhelmingly made up of Kakwa and other Bari speakers, who live among the local Aringa population. More broadly, South Sudan's conflict status certainly impacts the development of northern Uganda, whose similar path makes Ugandans more vigilant about 'the war next door'. Northern Ugandan offers just the environment to study the mobility paradigms the South Sudanese conflict contributes to an intensified cross-border movement at both directions, of different scales, and a borderland economy based on a displacement continuum and ties host communities to a humanitarian-development nexus.²²⁶ The movement habits of both displaced and host communities, also re-directs mobility patterns of traders, smuggles, as demands on food supplies and merchandises, create an economy and social environment more conducive to protracted displacement needs. These in turn, are anchored to interpretations about disenfranchised Ugandans who see in their South Sudanese neighbours an opportunity to develop their areas.

The displacement in turn, acts as a magnet to the humanitarian assistance which, together with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and partners, oversees the development of services, road infrastructure and security, which generates further demands from local communities and authorities. The upgrading of Arua on July 2020 is in many ways, concomitant to a bloated urban community consisting of a mix between migrants and refugees from South Sudan and DRC, and also traders and other urban dwellers from within Uganda. To them, Arua offers a safer and more prosperous option, where entrepreneurs in the hotel and restaurant business, and self-settled refugees, who do not find a settlement life aggregable, have firmly invested in permanent structures. In contrast, the visible disconnect between urban market centres, and Yumbe, Moyo and Adjumani, all housing the bulk of displaced refugees in the northern region, draws attention to the imperfect planning for the development of urban areas. Despite the known problems surrounding land allocation and leaseholds, the high influx of South Sudanese

²²⁶For example, Krause (2016), argues that although the northern Ugandan settlement is a development concern in nature, most implementing partners to UNHCR are not development agencies.

generally benefits host communities where health facilities, markets and trading centres have been inaugurated in more accessible areas, away from most settlement residents' reach.

Cross-border movement in the context of the conflict, also suffered a setback during 2018 after a major scandal shocked the humanitarian sector in Uganda.²²⁷ The total numbers of South Sudanese refugees were grossly in excess, which forced the UNHCR to order a biometric registration and verification programme between March and September 2018. The same exercise had been instituted in South Sudan to list the total number of IDPs residing in the Protection of Civilians' sites (PoCs).²²⁸ As it happens, civilians, host community members and even active armed actors have been known to become involved in 'registration multiplicity' and coercive methods to obtain food aid and cash allowance disbursements. As another aspect of the borderland's sub-national contexts, this is marked by economic interests of corrupt networks working in the assistance of aid delivery. Various rumours exist that blame refugees for using their status to access rights and assistance they would otherwise not be offered, while others think the displaced are used as pawns of a larger system that perpetuates conflict and attracts development, as part of a single process. As Moses firmly told me of Adjumani, "People want the war to continue, because if refugees return to South Sudan, Adjumani will not develop", invoking how people understand and the social and material benefits brought by the combination of humanitarian and development aid.

Part of the problem lies on Uganda's open-door policy, which is based on providing basic services to host communities in exchange for giving land to refugees. But faced with a funding shortfall of nearly USD 2 billion on top of the corruption allegations²²⁹, aid is neither enough for the refugees, nor the communities who accept them. The relationship between South Sudanese and their hosts further complicated as the displacement moved from temporary, to what now seems a semi-permanent phase, and with higher numbers than the existing landscape can support.²³⁰

²²⁷The Guardian, 2018. "Enquiry finds refugee numbers have been exaggerated in Uganda". Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/30/inquiry-finds-refugee-numbers-exaggerated-in-uganda>

²²⁸At the time, I worked in the Juba POC3 and took part of the biometric verification in May 2018. The exercise itself was eventually annulled due to many negative impacts, including further inflation of the number of residents. A second biometrical verification took place in September 2018. See IOM, October 2018. Biometric registration update. Accessed July 2, 2022. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94biometric-registration-update-juba-poc-sites-october-2018>

²²⁹The Spectator, 2017. "Lords of Poverty". Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-lords-of-poverty>

²³⁰I do not seek to imply that land is scarce. Rather, the vast northern Ugandan territory is composed of mostly rocky ground and soil which is unfit for cultivation.

5.2.2. Establishing mobility patterns

The South Sudanese civil war has ignited movements toward urban areas and across the borders. From the Ugandan side, I observed mainly two types of movements known among displaced South Sudanese; between settlements and urban centres, and between Uganda and South Sudan.²³¹ Despite my primary interest with the displacement out of South Sudan, the condition of those who have not been able to permanently return has now entered its eight year at the time of writing, and with hindsight, outflows during 2021 have again risen to 2017 levels (UNHCR 2021), which indicates that the signing of the R-ARCSS in February 2020 had little, if any effect of returns from Uganda. This brings an interest to investigate further the motives and the means (financial and means of transport) for crossing the borders at either direction. At the time, those registered in the settlements received a monthly allowance of UGX 31.000 (about USD 7) which severely affected their mobility and dietary options. Though if we assume financial constraints to be an impediment for moving between settlements, urban centres and beyond Uganda's international borders, we miss on important social networks that helps facilitate South Sudanese cross-border mobility, while being displaced. From all interviewed, most border crossers are men²³², who return to South Sudan to seek jobs or work in their farmland during the dry season (November through March). To the female participants, cross-border mobility is described as a challenge, mainly due to their caring and added roles taken in the absence of a male kin. There is, however, a significant movement of women between settlements and urban areas in Uganda, including to the border market towns of Koboko and Arua. Some do cross over to South Sudan to visit family, check what happened to their homes and land, returning to Uganda after a short while. Aware of such policy loopholes, the increase pressure to exercise cross-border mobility among South Sudanese interviewed, is understood as conscious choices made by household members whose 'refugee' status does not grant adequate material and social benefits.

²³¹Valuable insights have been made by O'Byrne (2021) about the everyday mobility of South Sudanese refugees. I thank Sarah Vancluysen for providing valuable commentary of an earlier draft of this chapter, which bears similarity with her own research about displaced South Sudanese in Uganda (2021, 2022).

²³²For reference, from the total number of 42 male respondents, 28 indicated having crossed back to South Sudan occasionally. It must be noted that in many of the household where women were interviewed, male kin have been absent due to their current presence in South Sudan. This makes it impossible to reach a more accurate account. This reference also excludes the FGD conducted in Koboko town.

5.3. The transnationality of land and conflict: identifying *multi-site living* among displaced communities.

“The difference is that in the village in Mugwo, the soil is better. Here, the piece of land given to us is just for settlement. They don’t give us land for cultivation, to be able to cultivate around the compound. It is not enough.”

displaced male, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019

In South Sudan, unclear and unspecified policies such as the Land Act of 2009 may account for the fierce disputes that emerged over land around Juba and rights to resettled in the transitional period (2005-2011), in what had been a poor urban development project. Yet, contrary to dominant beliefs, South Sudan’s land problems are not primarily ethnic in nature (Badiy,2014,2018; Johnson, 2006; Leonardi, 2011, 2013), but were left to such interpretations due to generalisations made around key groups involved in conflict over land.

The formation of ethnic categories had been reified and used to further the interests of powerful actors, including settlement leaders, public officials working in both the GoSS and the CES local government, military actors in the SPLA, and Bari chiefs, as they intervened in informal land transactions and formal demarcation processes. In practice, agreements between actors sometimes cut across categories such as ‘Equatorian’ and ‘Dinka’. Ultimately, what underpinned land conflict is the fact that both newcomers and poorer inhabitants remain disadvantaged in the competition for access to urban land regardless of their ethnicity, or whether they had been categorised by others as ‘Dinka’ or ‘Equatorian’. Territorial disputes between Equatorian communities and Dinka pastoralists who were backed by the SPLA have increased in the latest conflict. In one survey research about respondents’ perceptions of and experiences with housing, land and property (HLP) disputes, David Deng found that two out of five South Sudanese became displaced since the conflict began, from which 95% were displaced because of the conflict.

On the Ugandan side, the displaced communities were accommodated within approximately 69,336 hectares of land allocated for settlement, with Yumbe and Arua providing the biggest share of their communal land. According to Arua and Adjumani refugee desks, about 75 % of land allocated to refugees in the region is used for settlement purposes, while the remaining 25 % is distributed between agriculture and public services (UNDP 2018). With limited availability of cultivable land, many South Sudanese opt to cross back into South Sudan to access farmland where they can supplement their food intake or sell surplus.

Figure 10. Drying simsim and brick laying to raise income



Author's photographs, Bidibidi settlement, December 2019.

Research interviews also reveal how mobility options enhance displaced households' ability to carve out a *multi-site living*, often through informed decision-making. Having established durable connections with hosts and brokers to achieve their individual and collective goals, this dynamic feeds into the idea of 'the borderland as a resource rather than an obstacle' (Feysa and Hohne, 2010). Displaced households may opt to settle within the proximities of the borderland, where they can better benefit from cross-border mobility and mobilise resources and support on their own terms. Adapting to the situation of displacement has also contributed to expanding the geographical reach in which South Sudanese are "moving towards markets" (Thomas, 2019), to beyond its internal boundaries.

The borderland itself had been slowly transformed from a subsistence to a market economy with more competition and less reciprocity between refugees and hosts, where both remain strained by underdevelopment and must compete for access to the available means of production. This imbalance in the share of land, resources and services is cause for periodic conflicts in the settlements. The social and economic functions involving the borderland cannot be sustained in a context of high population density and movement and will require food security and livelihood strategies to move beyond the way in which humanitarian and development agencies address the situation in northern Uganda and South Sudan (Krause 2016). Permanent structures and mobility routes, in turn, imply the establishment of official and unofficial connections between Uganda and South Sudan, which have sprung in parallel to State level policies and projects.

The hardening of the borders, on the other hand, initiated by the State's interest in securing non-oil revenue, has brought opportunities to a wide array of actors – traders, soldiers, security personnel, spies – who can be found on either side of the border posts in Nimule and Elegu.²³³ The border also has an impact on local conflict, with ownership of land in the proximity to the Elegu customs, which has become the focal point of violent contestation between different ethnic groups that live on either side of the border.²³⁴ In 2014, the Kuku and Ma'di disputed the demarcation of the Moyo and Kajo Keji boundaries, which resulted in a deadly clash (Leonardi and Santschi, 2016), sparked by the Ugandan government attempt to demarcate the border.

5.3.1. Cattle and Conflict

“I was having 40 cows. Because I worked with the NGOs, they paid me money, then I started buying cows, buying cows, then I gave others to the extended community. If you marry a girl, that's the gift. That's the value of the girls. When the war broke out, they were stolen. We just ran without our things.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 26/10/2019

Arguably, livestock movement comes second in South Sudan within the displacement literature, and despite the continuing importance given to cattle in the lives of most South Sudanese, there is still a limited engagement with just how cattle raiding incidents profoundly affect the social-economic lives of South Sudanese. Estimates from 2015 declared that in South Sudan, the amount of cattle outnumbers the human population.²³⁵ It was not possible to disassociate from my interviewees description on the importance cattle has in their lives. Families had lost entire savings and investments made through cattle (acquiring more from wage labour or securing marriage, as above). The side effects of investing on cattle lie in their characteristic of 'portable commodity', and once lost, very rarely can be recovered. Marriage arrangements go on during conflict, and it may also be a response to debilitating economic circumstances of many displaced households, forcing parents to marry off their children at a younger age. Due to the large numbers of young women in the settlements, South Sudanese men are often attracted by the “abundance of your brides” and come to seal dowry agreements. While in some communities, customary leaders may impose a 'cap' of 30 cattle in dowry

²³³Zeller, 2013. *“Get It While You Can: Governance between Wars in the Uganda-South Sudan Borderland.”*

²³⁴Refugee Law Project, 2012. *“Ownership, Resettlement and Accountability: The Elegu Land Dispute in Northern Uganda.”*

²³⁵Reliefweb, 2014. *South Sudan, Where Livestock outnumbers People and the Environment Suffers*. May 13, 2014. Accessed June 29, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-where-livestock-outnumbers-people-and-environment-suffers>

agreements, it is not uncommon now to hear about dowry paid in the form of 300 to 500 cattle, according to a youth leader at Aylo settlement, who noticed as I turned my gaze on a tall and well-dressed South Sudanese young lady passing by the compound. “She had just been promised to someone in South Sudan for 300 cattle this very morning”, he commented.²³⁶ The way in which such economic assets are negotiated and transferred across South Sudan and beyond can obscure key elements in power dynamics rooted in the dowry system, as for example, connections forged between otherwise non-related ethnic groups, and assigning power to the bidder of a bride. The bride’s family and community form a bridge to the bargaining of power through the use of cattle, that can expand that power.²³⁷ In this complex manipulation of social relationships that target mobile assets - humans and livestock – over territory, transfers to and from various locations are reported. To the elite in South Sudan, it has become a matter of social status to offer hundreds of cattle for a single wife, rather than a necessity.

Researchers on the topic continue to evoke E.E. Pritchard’s eighty year old declaration: “Nuer say that it is cattle that destroys people, for more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause” (1940:49), when analysing how culture, prestige and financial independence continue to be valued through the ownership of large amounts of cattle at the expense of human life.²³⁸ Political and military elites have used resources gained during the war and the post-independence conflicts to acquire massive herds which are used to build their status and prestige, to cultivate networks of supporters and to pay bride wealth for their soldiers to marry – thereby securing their loyalty. Distribution of livestock has thus changed, as a political and military leverage takes place, aided by the fact that cash is not widely circulated in South Sudan, nor significantly available outside urban centres. As cattle remains largely non-commercialised, nor widely used for consumption, they have been linked to an internal ‘informal economy’ and tied to informal governance by elites.²³⁹

These accounts help to challenge the notion of violence during displacement as separated cases (Krause, 2017; Betts and Milner 2008), in that, inter-communal violence may compel

²³⁶Private communication, youth leader, Aylo settlement, 07/11/2019.

²³⁷Private communication with Edward, 30/10/2019.

²³⁸ICRC, 2018. “*Where wealth is counted in cattle, not cash*”, April 23, 2018. Accessed June 13, 2022.

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/south-sudan-where-wealth-counted-cattle-not-cash>

²³⁹Idris, 2018, “*Livestock and conflict in South Sudan.*” The literature on cattle in South Sudan indicates that livestock are not used for meat (FAO 2014), with the country instead, importing cattle from neighbouring Uganda for that purpose. A study in Greater Upper Nile reported that only when people are at their most food insecure, do they kill cattle for meat (USAID 2015:24, cited in Idris, 2018).

households to split or move together away from such threats. However, even localised violence has not fully accounted the changing circumstances of mobile and displaced South Sudanese.

There is also, another side to the presence of women in Ugandan settlements, informed by cultural insights into the evolving relationship between dowry and marriage, that attributes the value of girls as ‘assets’ to be protected for future family transactions. This does not simply fall within the domains of complex social-economic exchanges, but of political loyalties too, in the context of a shrinking economy and intensified competition for social status. These, and other anecdotes involving cattle, were often heard during informal conversations and interviews held in the settlements and urban areas in Uganda, and usually associated with the recent notion of cattle from South Sudan appearing along the borderlands by their thousands. Yet, due to the plausibility of accounts, there was no room to expand research on the topic.

5.4. Violence spill-over

On December 2019, after another week in Bidibidi, I travelled to Moyo, and down towards the Nile where I spent a few hours in the market area of Laropi, with Moses. He said we should meet in the refugee market, where he would show me settlement residents “buying things in bulk in the market and leaving for South Sudan” through *panya* roads. I observed, took notes and had informal conversations with shop owners, before proceeding to cross the Nile by ferry, and to Adjumani. Moses concluded that South Sudanese returning to Nimule region “do not want to be seen leaving the settlements, as this will lead to questioning their motives.”²⁴⁰ In the next few days, news circulated about the recruitment of civilians, including women, whereby opposition forces were registering people around Nimule. Two days later, on December 10, the body of a local man was discovered at Nyumanzi settlement, prompting both the displaced and host community to violently clash.²⁴¹ As the violence spread outside of the settlement, roads were blocked, and police force was brought in from across the region to help contain angry crowds. Images quickly became available online via national NGO staff and residents who either witnessed the deadly clashes or had received the images from others. From my accommodation at Adjumani’s Multipurpose Youth Centre, gunshots could be heard as police

²⁴⁰Personal communication, Laropi market, 08/12/2019.

²⁴¹New Vision, 2019. “*One killed, scores injured in refugee clashes*”. Accessed August 7, 2022.

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1512017/killed-scores-injured-refugee-clashes>

UNHCR, 2019. “*Press statement on the deadly violence in Nyumanzi settlement.*” Accessed May 23, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/press/2019/12/5df3e5b84/unhcr-statement-on-deadly-violence-in-ugandas-nyumanzi-refugee-settlement.html>

pursued and tried to disperse clashes. The tension was such that church leaders from South Sudan were called to contain possible revenge clashes. Police from across the region were called in to help, as the local force was not enough. I heard nothing from Moses until the next morning when he called on me to proceed to Boroli, along the same road clashes had occurred. Upon arrival we were immediately thrown into the discussion about the number of dead and the unfolding security response.²⁴² The incident represented another blow to the fragile peace negotiations in South Sudan and the relationship between both countries' communities, who continue to accuse each other of the violence. The South Sudanese interviewed on that day mostly refrained from commenting on what happened, and to avoid repercussions, many chose to remain within their compounds during these days. From settlement assistants and community leaders' accounts, I heard how the strategies to contain violence in the settlements remain stuck on stereotyping Nuer and Dinka as "violent" because they would "always fight", and hence, "they are not seen in the settlement". Many research participants at Boroli hail from other groups including Murle, and various Eastern Equatorian groups.

Still, aware about my position, now having to shuttle between roads and settlement areas, I had to consider limiting my exposure in the area, returning to the settlement only once more, on December 13. My eight-day visit to Adjumani was impacted by the incident, and on most days, I remained within the grounds of the Youth Centre, communicating through the phone with informants and local authorities, working on transcriptions and occasionally walked to town to meet the commercial officer and Moses.

5.4.1. Rumours, lies and consequences

I wrote extensively on my journal as the situation had escalated between December 10-12. Moses' change of behaviour was at the back of my mind, though there must have been some precaution over my presence, while the latest violent event unfolded. The information on the ground, communicated by the local OPM was hardly based on facts. During our second day in the settlement after things have calmed down, both Moses and our guide at Boroli laughed as they commented that every time there is violence in the camps, the OPM tells UNHCR it is

²⁴²Local accounts varied and contradicted those from authorities and newspapers over the following days; on this day for instance, people were talking about seven bodies found along the roads. Journal notes, Adjumani, 13/12/2019.

because of a football match. It became an ‘internal joke’ among locals and displaced communities, whose accounts differ from that of the authorities.

They also disclosed issues connected to Julia, who represents the refugees in the settlement, and whom I had met upon arrival. Claiming to be very busy, she had appointed a ‘guide’ from the displaced community to accompany us around Boroli. Moses pointed out that she is the only woman among an all-male (refugee) settlement representatives. She is in fact, a local Ugandan, which has infuriated the refugee community, especially after they found out she had been travelling to Ethiopia and Khartoum to speak on behalf of South Sudanese refugees during peace mediation talks. The real representative among the refugees, whom we also met that day, had not even been consulted, nor had been aware about the talks at the time they happened. A riot broke out recently because of this, and people wanted to challenge her. The OPM instead, told the UN/ NGOs that the riot was a result of a football match.

Our guide, also a displaced South Sudanese, accused the OPM of “appointing its own people when it comes to regional and international talks about the South Sudanese peace agreement, because the Ugandan government doesn’t want the refugees spoiling their activities.”²⁴³ A similar statement was heard at Aylo 1 settlement, where the youth leader disclosed that he had not been consulted, nor invited to a conference held in Arua - which happened just as I left for Adjumani - and instead, someone else went on to attend and ‘represent’ the refugee community. Concrete solutions to this situation are crucial beyond the ‘coexistence’ (Merkx,2002) narrative of the refugee regime, as the danger of misguided information and lack of direct representation from within the affected community, is an obstacle to the negotiation process, with its own consequences.

5.5. Displaced South Sudanese women in Uganda: re-configuring gender roles

“We fled from Nesitu to Aru Junction, and then to Nimule, and we were attacked on the way by government soldiers. Some civilians were killed. This displacement has changed our lives. I am now heading the household.”

displaced female, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019

The explorative pursuits and unpredictable situations that came with data collection, enabled me to transcend the purely disruptive effects of displacement, to engage further, with the ways in which South Sudanese women are exposed to social and economic realities in an unfamiliar

²⁴³Informal communication, Journal notes. Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019.

ground. In this case, reduced cross-border mobility is in question. Changes in living circumstances have forced women to cope with a new environment and social and economic structures. In 2018, women were estimated to represent over 85% of all South Sudanese sheltering in Uganda (UNHCR, 2018), a number that has been maintained throughout 2021, despite data inconsistencies. Some of the questions concerned the nature of maintaining ‘familial bonds’ while displaced, produced testimonies from women with a more nuanced insight about the way in which familial ties have been broken, something which had not often been captured in accounts from male respondents. Alone in Uganda, displaced women sustain the added challenge of negotiating their livelihood in competition with male host community members. The need for firewood and grass for example, results in extensive deforestation. The friction between the displaced community’s need to source building materials and fuel for cooking, contributes to host communities putting a price tag on local commodities South Sudanese did not expect to pay for. At Aylo settlement, a heavily pregnant woman with a small child by her side, said her husband is in South Sudan and comes to visit, though she alone oversees her children and their plot in the settlement. Commenting about the difficulties in having to bear the costs of living alone, she explained that “it is very difficult to maintain a good home in the settlement. A bundle of grass for the roof costs UGX10.000 and you need about 40 bundles to build a single roof.”²⁴⁴ Along with other women’s testimonies, the difficulties that single-headed households face in an environment that gives women little room to negotiate and mobilise resources, adds to the different qualitative lives of women headed settlement households.

There residual effects of human displacement create also potentially harmful coping mechanisms and cause a chain reaction. Increased cases of GBV within Ugandan households in the region are denounced on the extra-marital affairs between Ugandan host men and South Sudanese women (Saferworld, 2020). At the same time, this can also create new opportunities for South Sudanese women to increase their ties with Uganda and to provide for their children. A FGD conducted with six South Sudanese women in Boroli settlement, indicates the speed in which relationships may evolve within a debilitating situation. As one female South Sudanese explained, “we reproduce here anyways as we cannot stay here without reproducing. Our husbands are in South Sudan or dead for a long time.” She held up her new-born baby and declared he was born from a relationship with a local man. While such relationships have also

²⁴⁴Interview with displaced female, Aylo 1 settlement, 12/2019.

been known to cause tensions and exploitation of refugee women, as local host men are found to syphon away ration and cash allowance²⁴⁵, the primary concern for these women was expressed in the need to provide for their children's school fees and nutrition. Despite many of the interviewed women claiming to have better opportunities in Uganda, with some expressing a level of relief in breaking away from abusive relatives and relationships, it is not clear how the re-working of gender dynamics and the decisions made to negotiate access to services and livelihoods will play out. Momentarily, the views of these six women revolved around lamenting their marital arrangements in South Sudan.

“My husband has other wives in South Sudan he cares for. He was a big commander in Pibor and is now in the parliament. He married 27 wives. He thinks the UN is looking after me here, so he does not help me.”

displaced female, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019

Other women in the group complained that their husbands marry too many wives, to the point where they do not even come to know some of their children. The idea that families split across the borders, with some maintaining communication and relationships, while others do not, emphasises that the practice is invariably gendered, and places additional hardship to ‘co-wives’ sharing tasks among themselves. It also sheds light on the conditions of South Sudanese women-headed households, who adapt and re-work informal livelihoods under cycles of disruption. Confronted with a refugee status and mobility challenges, women are forced to re-evaluate their perceptions about security and to adopt both social and economic roles, which would have been rejected in their own societies. Because of the high prevalence of domestic violence in South Sudan, and issues around forced marriages, some women find respite in exile from the many types of abuses still tolerated in their home areas.

“Life is better here in Uganda. In South Sudan I was ok as a child, but my own father shot my mother and ran away. I was raised by my uncle and made to marry. I was not happy as my husband mistreated me, and I was only a housewife. Here, I am free.”

displaced female, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019

²⁴⁵Moses and I had run into a group of host men having lunch, cooked by South Sudanese women at Boroli settlement. The food is part of the women's monthly ration. Journal notes, Adjumani, December 13/12/2019. See also Saferworld, 2020 “Gender and Displacement” report which notes that Ugandan men prefer to negotiate the terms of lease for the land refugees occupy off the record, and with women, whom they view as easier to evict and more vulnerable to exploitation.

The decisions taken by the group of women with regards to their reproductive rights are being reclaimed, along with a sense of full responsibility over obtaining their livelihood and care for their children. This is not however, to imply a more favourable situation to South Sudanese women entering such relationships with their Ugandan male hosts. They more closely reflect variations in resource mobilisation across different settlement households, as moving out from, or in between settlements is not financially viable to all. Indeed, within the present situation, a growing number of South Sudanese come to negotiate their own security options away from kin and community leaders and find new ways to reclaim their ‘independence’. The multi-site nature of the research methodology captured individual and collective experiences of mobility and access to services in situations of protracted displacement. The point of departure lies in the breakdown of traditional ways in which people organise, produce and exchange their livelihoods, forcing them to seek alternative ways to access safety and basic services. In the South Sudanese cross-border displacement, where people come to navigate through the borderland, and evaluate opportunities and limitations, it is not clear what type of movements emerge or are re-arranged during and after displacement occurs, and how the relationship between centre-periphery is shaped. Loosing home in South Sudan is only one of many deprivations South Sudanese experience, though the bond to one another is also lost to many, who cope without “someone to sit with”.

“My house in South Sudan was looted, the soldiers took everything, and there is someone living there now. They changed the documents and claimed the house. I saw them one time when I went to check my house in Juba. I lost the documents when we were running away. I don’t face problems in going back to South Sudan, but I don’t have a house or anything left there.”

displaced female, Boroli settlement, 13-12-2019

Where security and the ability to move back and forth between settlement and South Sudan in this case, is not reported as an issue, the limitation for returning home is part of a growing bureaucratic and corrupt system encompassing land and property rights. Moreover, the legal and justice system in South Sudan remains especially skewed against women, which contributes to their condition in the settlements of Uganda becoming a more permanent one, with varying levels in mobilising resources and support. Across the settlements, some households are visibly wealthier compared to others.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶As a guide, I observed healthy looking women, who had at their disposal milk – considered a valued nutrient – which at the time of research, was priced at UGX1.000 per litre in the settlements. Even my assistants asked, “where do they get this money from?”, observing children drinking milk, while in most cases, people went without.

Others, who managed to visit their abandoned properties, especially in Juba and Kajo Keji, recounted how the army or allies have occupied their homes, having paid USD 300 for the tittle deed.²⁴⁷ The rightful owner loses the ability to challenge claims on their property if they cannot produce written evidence of ownership, which many do not have. It is a silent problem that, with most women residing in refugee settlements, will create another permanent problem around land and property rights as male kin become increasingly absent from displaced households. The impact of multiple disruption on female-headed household, had been met with opportunities and limitations, some of which are diffused from the wider transformation in the borderland, imparting from the intensification of flows of movements toward the settlements.

5.5.1. Uneven cross-border movements

“Women were left alone to cross over into Uganda. Some would cross with children, some would leave them behind, and others would come bit by bit bringing children and belongings separately. Women were leaving on foot mostly. Here, there is a lot of pressure to cater for the house and food. The experience of women is very stressful.”

displaced woman, Bidibidi settlement, 05/12/2019

The conflict has impacted the security and re-shaped mobility patterns within South Sudan and with regards to perform cross-border movements. While men are more likely to remain behind, to look after their assets or sustain a wage labour, women and children are sent to safety in Uganda. The complex assemblage of cross-border movements however, posed an empirical problem during field research; from a borderland security perspective, detailed data collection on the operation of power that enforces unequal hierarchies of mobility was not possible. I relied mostly on direct accounts from my respondents. That said, cross-border movements are not available on equal terms. Civilian mobility is largely impeded by the lack of funds to pay for transportation and additional costs involved with movement, meaning that most of the data available shows a higher percentage of people who fled on foot (UNHCR 2017). Though these also pose a challenge to the notion of *multi-site living*, they become embedded onto the messiness of State-making through cross-border movement controls. South Sudanese who entered Uganda via Kaya/Oraba border, expressed difficulties during their attempts to cross the border, as government soldiers would try to stop them. A Key informant warned that, “if caught, they would take you behind that hill [in kaya], beat you and even kill you. This is

²⁴⁷Interview with displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 06/09/2019.

because they don't like the bad publicity in the media about everyone fleeing South Sudan".²⁴⁸ Cited as one of the key reasons people have abandoned official borders and roads, the porous borders can provide an opportunity to those escaping from the reach of the State, armed actors and border officials. Respondents learn to navigate through insecurity and uncertainty, a situation which became part of the daily mobility repertoire of displaced South Sudanese within the proximity of the borderland. When insecurity escalates, it produces mass outflows of movements – such as in 2017 - which may then intersect with other type of movements (individuals going back to South Sudan as recruits, while civilians fleeing South Sudan for Uganda until violence de-escalates). These can then influence the new forms cross- border movements could take (i.e. to switch from official to unofficial routes).

While civilian movement in the previous war is remembered in terms of people being able to 'hide in the bush' with the SPLA, there is now a generalised feeling in the current conflict, where "violence follows people everywhere", to the point where it is no longer possible for many to remain in South Sudan.²⁴⁹ For women fleeing on their own account and with little resources, the journey often entails breaks along the way to try and obtain cash to survive or pay for transportation up to the border with Uganda. A woman from Bor interviewed in Aylo settlement, sold mandazis along the way to Juba during her journey, to pay for transportation. "It took me five days to reach Juba" she said, from where she later found transportation to Nimule. She now owns a shop and has no interest in going back to South Sudan.²⁵⁰ Perceptions about women as carers also raises suspicion over their capacity to provide food and shelter to opposition forces, making them a target of armed actors. Women who tried to flee South Sudan also encounter more difficulties than men. Multiple routes are taken to escape the violence in South Sudan, reaching the border of Kaya/Oraba, or Nimule/Elegu. The data collected on instances of flight, showed a certain 'selective bias' from the part of border authorities, and at times, detention or refusal to allow passage based on the identity profile of displaced individuals: "At Kaya we were arrested by the rebels. I had to show my markings to prove I am not a Dinka."²⁵¹ Women whose husbands fight in the army, however, negotiate passage by

²⁴⁸Interview with displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 26/10/2019.

²⁴⁹For reflection, a first time displaced South Sudanese said "during the previous war, we were hiding in the villages, so we did not come [to Uganda]. Interview with displaced male, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019.

²⁵⁰Interview with displaced female, Mungulla settlement, 05/11/2019.

²⁵¹Interview with displaced female, Bidibidi settlement, 26/10/2019.

declaring their connection: “The soldiers did not want us to cross. It was only when I mentioned my husbands’ name that they let us cross, as the soldiers knew him.”²⁵²

A woman from Aru Junction near Juba who fled during 2016, despite not being stopped at checkpoints, said that “at the border with Uganda, there are problems. I was asked for ID, and language is also a problem with officials not knowing my language”. She was denied passage through the official border at Nimule/Elegu, and instead, took a *panya* road after paying money to the police who let her and her group pass. Her children stayed in South Sudan with their aunt because the money was not enough to pay for their ‘clearance’. Cases like these may become familiar to contemporary mobilities of capital, people, ideas and technology that pose fundamental challenges to States and international organisations in their attempts to maintain a fixed order – in this case, with regards to the management and control movement - and their own legitimacy. Moreover, the labelling, and separation of ethnic identities underscores a long history of exchange and intermarriages across internal and external borders between South Sudan and its neighbours. The political developments that led to rigid identities being identified as either supporters or opponents of the current political administration of South Sudan is not a helpful guide to analyse or generalise mobility patterns and access, as these are increasingly negotiated at the individual level.

Key to this, is the ‘inequality of movement’ and sets of perceptions that are linked to notions of order and legitimacy (Richmond and MacGinty,2019). In re-telling their individual experiences in the process of displacement, I often heard the words ‘disturbed’ and ‘challenges’ frequently replacing the more triggered word ‘violence’ during interviews. Women’s body language showed reservation in expressing agency in more direct ways, over subjects that are frequently part of their male kin’s repertoire. Empirically, such vocalised ways shared by women, problematise an interpretation about how violence is experienced and what types of intensification comes to determine one’s decision to leave their homes all together. Whether women met ‘challenges’ along the routes, such as checkpoints and the demands for fees, or experienced sexual assault, being robbed or shot at, finding ways to express the amount of trauma and life-changing experiences was often suppressed by their genuine concern with, and necessity to provide for themselves and their immediate dependents. When verbalising these concerns, the multiple ways in which women came to experiment agency in the face of necessity, portrays some of the ways their life-changing experiences of displacement play out

²⁵²Interview with displaced female, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019.

once in Uganda. Many of these women originate from elsewhere in South Sudan and do not subscribe to the same cultural and linguistic group one might find in the borderland's sub-national areas. This is a gap in the recent history of the region, where the literature on refugee 'co-existence' for example, still maintains that borderland communities derive from the same ethno-linguistic groups, are familiar to either sub-national context, or can be easily integrated locally. Language is a significant barrier, sometimes with security concerns attached, meaning that some of the settlement's residents are in fact less mobile than others, attract less empathy from their fellow South Sudanese/host community, and are further deprived from opportunities to work and socialise (see Chapter 6.3). In the context where mobility and displacement intersect between northern Ugandan settlements and South Sudan, the situation informs about how these spaces are mutually shaped and reshaped by communities whose livelihoods depend on some degree of mobility.

Another fact to consider, which will require further investigation, is the enforced dislocation of women once inside the settlements, because of harassment from South Sudanese recruiters. A single mother of two whom I met at the market in Adjumani, had already lost two other children in South Sudan, before coming to Uganda. She had just sought help in Adjumani after being approached by men who tried to recruit her to work 'in the bush' in South Sudan.

While other women from the settlements were said to have gone, she declined and moved away from the settlement with her two children who she wants to continue at school in Uganda.

Now in Adjumani town, where recruiters are less likely to appear due to the presence of Ugandan authorities, she qualifies as 'self-relocated', which puts her in danger of losing a refugee status claim. Some of these accounts do not directly target the nation-wide conflict but are implicated in a story line involving displaced communities as 'assets' from which support for the conflict is still pursued. In this respect, the South Sudanese State does make itself present by encroaching on Ugandan settlements. Women especially, are sought for their caring labour, while also being sexually exploited. As an example of unintended re-location to the urban centre of Adjumani, my female interviewee above will be required to change her method of livelihood acquisition. As a consequence, these scenarios limit further understanding and representation of micro-level cases, with variations in population movements. In recent years have been compounded by the internal politics and policies that in South Sudan and northern Uganda, have pushed different communities into closer proximity.

5.6. Implications for a *multi-site living*

While studies of violence have often focused on ideology and on identifying the reasons for violent struggle, others have turned to the ‘everydayness’ of violence (Nordstrom 2001) and explored the nature of social-political violence as experienced by average citizens, to examine how it plays out in the larger contexts of living on the frontlines of wars. The core argument determines how violence becomes entwined in people’s lives, with death as a point of reference. Violence reconstitutes and reforms the whole society; it determines where they can live, which school they can attend, which markets they can access and whether or not they can travel.²⁵³ As the number of South Sudanese displaced has risen to new record high levels, and currently represent the highest in the African continent,²⁵⁴ there is room to question the extent in which this resonates with the notion of *multi-site living* as a strategy to counter limitations under the condition of displacement in Ugandan (chapter 4.4.1). The implication this brings, may see South Sudanese citizens erased from national accounts through policy and practice²⁵⁵, as South Sudanese also loses claim over their ancestor land – and cattle in South Sudan.²⁵⁶ In the long-term, this is important because we still do not know what type of social contract can emerged between displaced South Sudanese and the State. At best, the situation is partly mitigated by having families split along gender lines, between South Sudan and Uganda. Still, the high risks in performing cross-border movements while displaced, can greatly impact flow, frequency and those displaced from accessing jobs and services on either side of the border, which in turn, triggers additional security concerns. The engagement with transnational multi-site mobility attracts attention to techniques adopted and operationalised by displaced and mobile communities, often away from the gaze of border authorities and humanitarian actors, although not entirely outside of their knowledge. O’Byrne and Ogeno (2021) in their research about the ‘pragmatic mobility’ among South Sudanese moving between Palabek and Pajok, stress that cross-border mobility between the two locations “must not be conflated with either voluntary repatriation or any greater sense of personal security” (2020:762). Mobility patterns are forged across boundaries and borders when those who cross them are part of the historic

²⁵³Refugee Law Protect, 2002. “*War as Normal*”. Accessed June 3, 2022.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/refugee-law-project-working-paper-no-5-war-normal-impact-violence-lives-displaced>

²⁵⁴Ensor, 2020. “*South Sudanese Women on the move*.”

²⁵⁵As for example the Kuku, who have been found in Uganda for so long, they are now listed as a Ugandan ethnic group.

²⁵⁶As in with Kiir’s decrees that increased internal boundaries, which exacerbated displacement dynamics, rather than advancing State-making.

and cultural exchanges that have been maintained even through colonial ‘separation’ or conflict. The distinctions between international and national boundaries crossed by displaced communities are clearly ambiguous; given that some people “bridge the gap” between the two (Kaiser, 2006:209). Both host and displaced communities form business ventures, develop and negotiate transport systems, and establish relationships of collaboration which makes movement a precondition for such achievements, and contributing to the changes in the social and economic structure of the borderlands (Chapter 7). It is thus necessary to consider that in such regions, and under certain conditions, the establishment of a multi-site’ way of living, where human mobility across international borders offers better opportunities than choosing either one side, outweighs the benefits of a ‘social contract’ promise between State and citizens, where ‘fixidity’ is aspired.

5.7. Conclusion

I left Adjumani on December 16, after the roads leading to Gulu had been cleared for travel, still processing all the information I received on my phone and through social media about the incident at Nyumanzi. It had been difficult to separate fiction from facts, when all things considered, displaced South Sudanese and host communities have had their share of disagreements over the war, the peace process, and their wider socio-economic condition. Finally, varied experiences with displacement documented, makes the representative number of interviewed participants quantitatively redundant, though of qualitative value in these uncertain times. The South Sudanese cross-border displacement has brought important transformations to the borderland, in what constitutes a new phase in its long history. The rehabilitation roads, settlement land and their redistribution across transnational networks plays an important role in the pursuit of livelihoods, both to the existing borderland community, and to newcomers. The precarious conditions in Uganda, however, are among the key reasons why South Sudanese, in particular single members of displaced households, opt to return to South Sudan to look for ways to supplement their livelihoods. Mixed intentions for the future of displaced South Sudanese in assessed areas of Uganda reported unclear outcomes for the future. While many have stated a desire to return home, this is described with resignation and admission that it may not be possible for years to come. Others firmly stated they will never return to South Sudan. This shows that displaced South Sudanese have carefully weighted opportunities against limitations that come, or are imposed by their situation, which in turn, may vary based on social or financial status, gender, personal security. The emerging social re-

organisation of life in a new environment has also intensified the reconfiguration of gender norms; displaced women have gotten exposed to existing issues of labour, land and property rights, in an unfamiliar ground. This is compounded by the choice of entering personal relationships meant to augment livelihood prospects, with the notion of such relationships being mutually beneficial open to question. Ultimately, South Sudan's relationship with its neighbours, especially Uganda with regards to the borderland, points to future analysis about the synchronous relationship between State making and displacement and provide a better idea on what type of social contract (if any) can emerge from it.

CHAPTER 6

State, non-state actors and civilian relationships

“They look at the country as their property. They think they are there for life.”

displaced male, Arua, 30/08/2019

6.1. Introduction

To part ways with the two preceding chapters, the historical linkages between border demarcation, displacement and State-making in the region, along with episodic violence these processes have instigated, should be clear by now. This chapter delves into complex and fragmented civil-military relationships that emerged during the civil war - which constitutes the second theme this thesis seeks to address. Lack of access and insecurity at the time of field research were addressed (3.4) and re-oriented to utilise interviews with former combatants displaced to Uganda. The narratives of former State and non-state actors about the deterioration of State-society relations also informs and zooms in on a reversal of power structures and agency of South Sudanese in Uganda, from those perceived to “belong to the government side”.²⁵⁷ From the premise that the current conflict represents a by-product of the tensions at the top of SPLM party throughout 2013, tensions between the executive and the army revolving around the integration of militias and reintegration of defectors into the military (Warner 2013), had worsen when president Kiir dismissed the entire opposition cabinet in a single blow.²⁵⁸ These had been key factors standing in the way of implementing the 2015 ARCSS and the 2018 R-ARCSS, which remained unresolved at the time of field work, and piling on top of problems to do with the re-division of internal states from 10 to 32, and in turn the mass displacement which became the highest in Africa by the end of 2017. With a government composed of former ‘rebels’, and a military that in 2014 was arguably the world’s second largest²⁵⁹, armed actors’ influence on South Sudan’s public and private life cannot be denied. I situate the status of civil-military relationship within the present displacement. Additionally, extensive insights were

²⁵⁷Quote from Edward. Journal notes, 28/10/2019. To be clear, I do not attempt to make generalisations, but rather, to inform on a particular stream of data compiled from multi-site interviews and my own observations during the time of field research.

²⁵⁸On July 23, 2013, it was broadcasted on radio, decree number 49, which announced “the relief of Dr. Riek Machar as VP of the Republic”, and order 50 and 51, relieving “all national ministers of the government”, along with deputies. These were the 55 most powerful government officials in the country. See Zach Vertin, *A Rope from the Sky*, 2022, pp259-60.

²⁵⁹De Waal, 2014. “*Visualizing South Sudan: The Culprit: The Army.*” Accessed May 2, 2022. <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2014/03/13/visualizing-south-sudan-the-culprit-the-army/>

collected from interviews with three key informants here referred to as Ben, Gabriel, Yohan and Edward. Their experiences and insights largely suggest that discourses about civilian support for the conflict is fraught in diverging views that consider the extent in which civilians pay the price of conflict.

The objective is to evaluate the extent to which a narrative of support for either party to the conflict reflects in the everyday realities of those displaced by the civil war, considering intense targeting of civilians in South Sudan, and oftentimes beyond its borders. The lines that separate how access to services and food procurement takes place during conflict, also shapes the relationship between the army and civilians, which requires a revision on how coordination to access livelihoods takes place between civilians and armed actors. The question more broadly, enquires **How armed actors and conflict-affected communities coordinate to maintain production and services in order to survive?** and shows another aspect of limited mobility and social exclusion in the Ugandan settlements, based on the past profiles of research participants.

6.1.2. The arena of interaction and collusion

“You don’t know exactly who is the official and who is not, who is in the army and who is not. Everybody can get a uniform and wear it, and pretend he is a soldier, become a threat to the community and start killing. And tomorrow you may find that this person doesn’t even have a relationship with the army.”

Gabriel, Bidibidi settlement, 07/09/2019

The borderland between South Sudan and Uganda explored thus far, is also the playing field of State and non-state actors, both with an ability to morph into one another, and onto each other’s territory. As a direct consequence of the proximity of the settlements from the porous Uganda-South Sudanese border, SPLA and opposition soldiers have had an easy access to the displaced population, much in continuation from previous wartime.²⁶⁰ UPDF soldiers’ encroachment into South Sudanese territory on the other hand, often occurs in tandem with an escalation of insecurity that threatens its own interests and citizens.²⁶¹ The literature about State and non-state actors who build wealth from conflict continuation gained steam with the release

²⁶⁰de Vries, 2012. The borderland more generally, are the sites from where to observe the performance of the State, highlights the complexities of war to peace transition.

²⁶¹Janmyr, 2014. *Recruiting Internally Displaced Persons into Civil Militias: The Case of Northern Uganda*. Nordic Journal of Human Rights, Vol 32, issue 3, pp199-219. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18918131.2014.937203> ; All Africa, August 2021. “UPDF on high alert over fresh war in South Sudan”. Accessed August 4, 2022. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202108110115.html> .

of documentary and reports that expose the portfolio of lucrative business ventures of top South Sudanese political and military figures and their Ugandan counterparts.²⁶²

“The border became important to the government and the army because they get their money, and all the imports go through them. There was nothing that was exported. The borders with Congo and Uganda were there, people were collecting money just for themselves, to do some developmental projects in the country. The borders became significant to individuals within the government, because individuals benefit more than the government.”

Ben, Arua, 30/08/2019

South Sudanese elites manipulate conflict for their own strategic gains (De Waal, 2015; Craze, 2019; Ryle et al., 2001; Thomas, 2015). Though the power and wealth accumulated also extends beyond private gains. Top army outfits amass enormous wealth in cattle, driving up the bride wealth price countrywide in the process, and acquiescing underpaid soldiers into loyalty in exchange for dowry payments from their ‘patron’. This adds to a situation where weapons flow in abundance, compulsive defection has become standard, and violence is employed as a method to achieve both private and collective goals.²⁶³ The entanglement between armed conflict and its interference to structural changes that regulate social norms has contributed to intensifying both structural and political violence across South Sudan’s internal and external borders.

News about armed individuals turning up in the settlements to look for particular persons were constant during fieldwork²⁶⁴, which makes the interests of the South Sudanese State being transmitted through official and unofficial channels to silence dissent, persecute opposition and those deemed supporters, and with an informal mandate to reach beyond its borders with Uganda. The reciprocity is mutual, with UPDF operating on South Sudanese soil up to recent times, which could give reason of why seeking permission to interview security forces had been such a challenge. The notion that there exists an unchallenged support for either side of

²⁶²John Lamu’s three-part documentary, *The Profiteers* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT8sfhJNiVA&t=1211s>) caused a stir when it was released in September 2018, prompting key individuals involved in South Sudan’s conflict to respond and deny having built wealth through conflict, such as Paul Malong (Kahawatungu, 2018).

One year on, George Clooney’s *The Sentry* 2019 report, “The Taking of South Sudan” added to a delicate situation, while a C4ADS report, *Money Tree: Teak and Conflict in South Sudan*, followed in January 2020.

²⁶³See for example a report by Small Arms Survey 2012, “*My neighbour, my enemy*”, 2014 “*Insecure power and violence*”.

²⁶⁴International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2019. “Understanding Conflict Dynamics around refugee settlements in northern Uganda”, August 28, 2019. Accessed August, 8 2022. <http://refugee-rights.org/new-report-understanding-conflict-dynamics-around-refugee-settlements-in-northern-uganda/>

the conflict, has restrained particular group members from expressing their views and participating in socio-economic activities alongside their fellow South Sudanese, resulting in their exclusion from public life as displaced individuals in Uganda.

6.2. “We were not prepared”: admissions of a former combatant

An exploration on the status of South Sudanese civil-military relationships was conducted in West Nile, as former combatants in the SPLA movement, find themselves displaced to Ugandan settlements and urban areas. A member of the South Sudanese Urban Refugees Association (SSURA), and a former combatant, Ben was part of the organising committee in the transitional government of South Sudan during independence, while working in the security sector in Juba. “I observed the speeches of Kiir and Machar and their body language...you could see that there was going to be a problem”, he began, opening a long discussion on the 2005-2011 transitional period. Riek’s forces who, at the time had been based in Khartoum, started flowing into South Sudan, and commanders came in vowing to stop the war, though instead of using the momentum for good,

“they came with their guns and their ammunitions. They came into the system, minus training, with their big ranks. So that was the threat. Somebody who comes with an ideology, with their force, and then immediately you put them in with your forces (Kiir) without training, giving them orders...in a system that was supposed to work.”

Ben also recounted events prior to independence, when in the 2010 sub-national elections of state governors and the presidency of the future nation were underway. While Salva Kiir took the top position²⁶⁵, tensions quickly rose over the ballot results in Jonglei, after George Athor and David Yau Yau lost their bid. The credibility of the exercise itself was highly questioned, as the Carter Centre (2010) noted widespread irregularities in vote tabulation. Both Athor and Yau Yau took up arms and launched a series of deadly attacks in the months prior to the 2011 referendum, to the point where it threatened to jeopardise the whole referendum process.²⁶⁶ To Ben, these localised conflicts spiked a snowball effect, when Athor “rebelled against the government”, marking the beginning of the problem in Central Equatoria, and summarised that

²⁶⁵Salva Kiir was elected president of Southern Sudan in 2010, a position he inherited when the country became independent in 2011 under a clause in the TCRSS. There have been no presidential elections in South Sudan since, and the newest scheduled for 2023, already postponed from 2021.

²⁶⁶Reuters, February 2011. “*South Sudan’s renegade General George Athor*”. Accessed 29 March 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-south-athor-idUSTRE71E4CX20110215>

“people were looking forward to independence, having in mind something that was already likely to disturb the independence.”²⁶⁷

The crisis in Jonglei was not an isolated challenge to the nascent State and its forming government; by September 2011, at least a dozen individuals had initiated or coordinated insurgencies against the Southern government since the April 2010 elections.²⁶⁸ The then-deputy secretary general of the SPLM, Anne Itto, told US officials that the process of selecting candidates had thrown the party into disarray.²⁶⁹ Athor eventually died in December 2011, near the border with DRC²⁷⁰, while the outcome of the conflict in Jonglei resulted in the Pibor Peace Accord in 2014 between Yau Yau and the government, and created the Greater Pibor Administrative Area.²⁷¹ This eventful period in South Sudan’s formative months as recounted by former combatants, who view them as opportunities lost in the background of sacrifices made during the long war, according to which Ben firmly believed,

“South Sudan was not prepared. People just focused on looting the country’s resources and the funding. You were supposed to prepare the people, send them to courses, train them. Because in the bush, people are just trained on how to fight. Managing a country is not like fighting in the bush. So that was the mistake. The leadership of the country, none of them has managed a country before. It was a new thing.”

Ben, Arua, 30/08/2019

Retrospectively, Ben thinks that after two decades in the rebel movement, the post-war military structure became “more complex”, where commanders bypass their military duties to influence “his tribesmen and then decide whatever he wants”. He articulates the same observation others have made on the issue of land grabbing, which he blames on the army’s attitude of “I’ll get that [land] and then will put it for investment.” Ben was, however, careful not to cast shade on the SPLA-IO to which he had subscribed to, though his disillusion with the post-independence behaviour of combatants does not only include members of the presidents’ ethnic group. The civil war between the SPLA-IO and the government, after all, has been characterised by repetitive and extreme violence, often in the form of ‘revenge killings’, and sexual violence

²⁶⁷Interview with displaced male, Arua, 30/08/2019.

²⁶⁸Small Arms Survey, 2011. *“Fighting for Spoils: Armed Insurgencies in Greater Upper Nile.”* Most of these insurgencies were suppressed by 2013, just before the current crisis began (Small Arms Survey, 2013).

²⁶⁹American Embassy Khartoum, 2010. *“Independent SPLM candidates create crisis within the party”*, 16 February 2010. Accessed August 6, 2022. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10KHARTOUM264.html>

²⁷⁰BBC, November 2011. *“South Sudan George Athor Killed.”* Accessed August 6, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16273758>.

²⁷¹ODI, 2017. *State-building and legitimacy experiences in South Sudan.* Accessed July 25, 2022. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5acde0abe5274a76c13df800/15.-Statebuilding-and-legitimacy_experiences-of-South-Sudan.pdf

against women.²⁷² I often ran into Ben in Arua, observed him at the hotel in the evenings, and continued to occasionally converse with him at the cafeteria,²⁷³ apart from hearing others speak of him, which made me question just how detached he is from the opposition movement.

6.2.1. “The previous war was better than this one”

The general flow of interviews and information shared informally during my interaction with Ugandan security forces and South Sudanese former combatants, often matched the view of civilians who retrospectively evaluated the current civil war. While former combatants often explained that “Garang’s war was better”²⁷⁴, in that ‘rules were obeyed’, civilians also portray the previous war as “better than this one”; the key point being that previously, civilians could flee to the rural areas under the protection of the SPLA, to shelter against Sudanese forces. Now, according to them, that is not possible since civilians are followed everywhere and targeted by multiple South Sudanese armed groups.

A simplified account of a lack of command-and-control order does no justice to the complexity of the socioeconomic relationship developed in the background of a displacement continuum. People’s evaluation of their own survival strategies such as ‘hiding in the bush’, proved unhelpful in the post-independence period. When asked about their relationships with armed actors, some commented that “the previous war was better than this one”²⁷⁵, which initiated a new turn in the post-independence relationship between civilians and authorities in general, as “this time, in 2016, Riek ran towards Equatoria and the government soldiers followed him targeting everyone because they would think people in Equatoria were supporting Riek” (ibid). Edward had accompanied me and often initiated several of my interviews with former government and army officers – like himself- in Bidibidi. On one evening, after we had returned from a series of interviews and walks around Bidibidi, my mind was filled with questions about whether it is possible for a relationship between armed actors and civilians in such a context to develop in the future. In talks we had been having that day in the settlement, people have chiefly lamented that those in position to defend civilians, have turned around to attack them.

²⁷²Pinaud (2020) for example, details the genocidal tone in which the civil war has been characterized, and the brutality towards women.

²⁷³Arua’s Cafeteria, as it is popularly known, is located adjacent to the main Hospital, along the main Avenue.

²⁷⁴Interview with displaced male, Arua, 30/08/2019.

²⁷⁵Interview with displaced male, Bidibidi settlement 05/12/2019.

“The national army will have that feeling that they are there to protect the population. But when it’s a tribal army, they also understand they have an opportunity. Let me ask you something. If you see the embassies (of South Sudan), how many non-Dinkas do you see there? Whether it is Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Europe... all these ones are just one tribe. Even the ministries in Juba are like this, and if there are any minorities, these are puppets of them, because they use them to access other people. The current governors are a good example, whether it is in Torit, Yei, Juba.... these are sons of Yei who are in the pockets of the Dinkas. I don’t know how he feels, if he sees that his brother has been killed, and his wife and relatives are dying. How do I feel as a governor?”

Edward, Bidibidi settlement, 05/09/2019

The apparent disdain leaders have shown against civilian lives lost, has become a stain on each peace agreement and cease-fire signed in the course of the civil war, and a source of continuing mistrust on local leaders perceived to change sides whenever it benefits them. The conflict situation also widened the extent in which armed actors come to influence the cross-border dynamic between South Sudanese and Ugandans in the region (Chapter 7.6). Edward shared his views on anecdotal commentaries heard during interviews and informal conversations we had with settlement community leaders, though he remained firmly objective on the matter:

C.I.: Do they (SPLA) have any control over what happens on the Ugandan side of the border?

Edward: I think these are allegations. The government has its soldiers who come in the settlement to monitor things on certain occasions. But they cannot influence here.

There are clear contrasts between Edward’s opinion and the extent in which the SPLA sustains influence at the borderland and on Ugandan soil.²⁷⁶ The accounts from research participants who detail incidents involving the SPLA on Ugandan soil (Chapter 5, 6,7) are themselves examples of ways in which the South Sudanese State maintains a presence in the lives of the displaced, with documented effects to their safety and security. For these reasons, it was not always possible to follow firmly on the views of key informants, but to consult further with other sources and available news covering the violent incidents.

²⁷⁶As recent as 2021, the SPLA has increased its presence and influence at the borders it shares with Uganda and was found to engage in attacks against Ugandan traders which resulted in 28 truck drivers dead, and 16 trucks burnt down. The deteriorating situation was brought to the Ugandan Parliament, whose members were also surprised to learn of the SPLA’s direct interference with a project at Aswa river in Uganda. See Parliament of Uganda 2021. “Parliament addresses Elegu border security concerns”. Accessed August 13, 2022. <https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/5723/%E2%80%98address-elegu-border-security-concerns%E2%80%99>

6.3. Being from “that tribe” in the settlement: coping with immobility and exclusion

Gabriel was introduced to me by Edward in Bidibidi, as a voice from the ‘opposite’ side. An ethnic Dinka from Abyiei who lived in Equatoria for twenty years, he had worked for the government in South Sudan until 2016, when the escalation of violence reached a breaking point with the government. Reflecting on the war to peace transition and the formation of the State of South Sudan, Gabriel opened our discussion:

“They were emotional about this whole matter of getting out from these Arabs. But I think they were not ready. They don’t know how we can move on. The South Sudanese didn’t know exactly what to do if they got independence, or how to administer this country. This is my own personal view. We were just called to vote for separation, but we were not ready, because the government itself was not ready. The unity was only during the voice for separation but creating a country after independence ... you can see that is the result of where we are now. People are not united, they are very divided.”

Gabriel, Bidibidi settlement, 7/09/2019

The realisation that independence was centred on the idea of secession first, and solving internal wrangles later, goes to the heart of the problems that kept piling on top of the other. Without a common enemy and goal, secession made existing internal problems salient, and they quickly became the focus of attention, such as the issue of state boundaries and borders. These dialogues belong to the war to peace transition period and are centred on questions about whether the right people were appointed to the right positions.²⁷⁷ After two decades of struggle during the war, priority was given to military functions, while political appointments often rewarded individuals for their service rather than competence and professional expertise. With the national army disproportionately portrayed as the main culprit, corruption has contributed to high security expenditure, due to many "ghost soldiers" and the pay for SPLA personnel was said to have been raised to match their counterparts in Sudan to keep them loyal. An Enough Project report (2017) counted 238.375 security staff serving in the army and other national security forces; 97 percent of which serve in the army, though this figure includes “tens of thousands of names of ghost soldiers.”²⁷⁸ New patterns of violence emerged, facilitated by the flow of new weapons, and forms of authority outside the parameters and scope of the

²⁷⁷Deng, F. 2015. “Government of South Sudan”, in *Bound By conflict*, 2015, pp121.

²⁷⁸Enough Project report, 2017. “*Weapons of Mass Corruption*”. Accessed August 29, 2022. https://enoughproject.org/files/WeaponsOfMassCorruption_012417.pdf

And as an AfDB (2018b) report noted, by the time of the oil production shutdown in 2012, the security payroll accounted for 58% of the total government spending. Wages and salaries of security personnel took about 50% of the security budget each year from 2011/2012 to 2013/14 and rose to more than 75% from 2014/15 to 2017/18.

central State. To simply “fear death”, after witnessing violence against their kin and friends, an emotion that appears to overflow into memories of unrestrained violence in South Sudan, was often invoked during interviews. Even long after field research was over, such events continued, and with immediate retribution in northern Uganda, where these communities are also found.²⁷⁹

On the Ugandan side of the border, individuals perceived as being ‘associated with the government of South Sudan’ – those deemed ethnic Dinka - become the minority and are excluded from the social life in the settlements, resorting to being on guard and keeping a low profile. The settlements of northern Uganda had emerged from the previous war, as places where “norms, hierarchies and status are constantly being renegotiated” (Turner, 2005: 314). It is difficult not to be drawn into the ethnic rhetoric that dominates debates on South Sudan’s diverse societies. On the other hand, it is important not to discount how ethnicity is embedded in everyday popular discourses. Certain narratives can put researchers and researched in a difficult position when trying to critically identify group bias for example (why and how it manifests) and decide on writing about it or leave it aside, for fear of stocking safety and security concerns. The settlements are thus no ‘safe havens’, but politicised arenas of complex relationships and where people bring up the past to frame certain ethnicities as ‘static’ examples of a group’s interests.

“You cannot be a supporter; you cannot be supporting either the government or IO. If you are from that tribe, you cannot leave in this camp, or you can be isolated. I am from a tribe where there is so much hatred, they hate it, and you have to be silent. If you want to survive, you don’t show support. If you are from both tribes, you can’t do anything, you are just isolated, rejected.”

Gabriel, Bidibidi settlement, 07/09/2019

In Uganda since 2016, Gabriel was close to Riek Machar, based in the same area where in December 2013 violence started in Juba. After the initial days of chaos in the capital, Gabriel could not take it anymore. “I became an internally displaced person and relocated to another area. Then I was a victim of tribalism and hatred.” Gabriel’s ethnic background meant he was

²⁷⁹In a recent event reported around Nimule, a deadly cattle raid has left at least 20 people dead and perpetrators had gone away with thousands of livestock, prompting revenge mobilization that reached the Ugandan settlements. Eye Radio, May 11, 2022. “20 people killed and 10,000 animals stolen in Mugali cattle raid.” Accessed July 12, 2022. <https://www.eyeradio.org/20-people-killed-10000-animals-stolen-in-mugali-cattle-raid/> Radio Tamazuj, May 11, 2022. “Nimule residents fear intensifying tensions”. Accessed July 12, 2022. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/nimule-residents-fear-intensifying-tensions>

not accepted at the Protection of Civilian's Sites (PoC) in South Sudan and was forced to be on constant move prior to leaving the government and crossing into Uganda, as a refugee in the settlement.

"I could not enter the POC, only certain tribes can. I am from another tribe which if you are discovered, is hard for you to move. I just went from one area to another area, and from the second area, also being a victim of tribalism because they discovered I was from that tribe, and nobody would allow me to stay with them, so I decided to come [to Uganda]."

In many ways, these experiences amount to questioning the effectiveness of the refugee policies and durable solutions implemented to address not only the rights, but the safety and security of displaced South Sudanese. For many like Gabriel, there is no distinction available, and the measures taken to enable a safe surrounding are primarily of their own initiative, to remain 'segregated' and 'silent', avoiding unwanted attention. In Bidibidi for another round of interviews, Edward and I began our 'house-to-house' visits. There were only six Dinka households other than Gabriel's. A tall and scarily slender senior male, Yohan spoke in a lower tone which was difficult to hear, given the noisy surroundings.

Originally from Unity state, Yohan was keen to discuss the intersection between cattle, the market and security in his region, and the changes he has seen from 2014 onwards. He identified the growing asymmetries in the relationships between armed actors and civilians as having much to do with the control of the markets by the army and the looting of cattle from civilians, including his own. As we talked, surrounded by small huts covered with tarpaulin, a young boy dressed in loose clothes and wearing sunglasses, appears behind Yohan. At first, Yohan did not notice the potential disrupter, who talked loudly and did not seem to fit the environment. Edward was nowhere to be seen, having gone to visit a friend nearby. The young boys in the hut must have understood the situation enveloping us and tried to lure the disrupter into their hut by offering him food. He insisted on coming outside and made a move next to me, still standing. Yohan was quiet, looking down, as I pleaded with the boys to ask him to stop shouting and that he could not sit with us (all the while trying to hide my recorder from view). The boy stuck his hand out to greet me, sat in a chair behind Yohan and leaned over, interested in what we had to talk about. I could not make out whether he would be able to understand English, though the situation was now obviously a security risk, and not more for me than for Yohan. Below in verbatim, the moment of fear arising on Yohan, as he stares at me nearly shaking, alerted in me a search for a way to pause the interview without being

obvious. With all the disruption, we forgot where the conversation was, and I quickly made up a question, as we both spoke through our eyes:

C.I.: So in terms of the presence of the armed groups ... how do they feed themselves?

Y: Those, those people... eh, now, (becomes weary of the boys' presence and pauses) ... I fear that one (speaks quietly about the boy and directs his eyes behind him)

C.I.: Uhum (I nod in agreement)

At this point Edward emerged in the distance and took my chance, pretending we had been waiting for him. Someone had alerted Edward about the boy around the Dinka area and he came to take us to a different place nearby to proceed. This time, Edward positioned himself outside of the improvised church, to make sure we would not be disturbed. I asked Yohan if he thought he would be in danger and whether he would have protection if there was an escalation of the boy's attitude, which he assured it was not going to be an issue. The incident that had just befall us, made Yohan draw parallels to the situation in South Sudan which compelled him to leave:

“Before, our communities in general, had good harmony, good relationship, we were living in peace. But after this war started, people are not in good relationship. We had no segregation, like this is from Dinka, this is from Nuer, it was not there.”

Yohan, Bidibidi settlement, 26/10/2019

Small group segregation in the Ugandan settlements is not uncommon, though it leaves South Sudanese like Yohan, who are judged negatively for being ethnic Dinka, at the mercy of their fellow displaced neighbours, mostly Bari from Central Equatoria State. They recognise how ethnic rhetoric has made Dinka who oppose the government directives, being associated with the violence in South Sudan, and beyond its borders. In an apparent turn of events, ethnic Dinka become new minorities in the settlements, excluded, and often targeted by communities when violence emerges, or someone dies in South Sudan or Uganda – as a member of opposition groups. The structurally exclusionary and limiting space for mobility – shows that reviewing the narrative of refugees or displacees as homogeneous groups is also problematic.

6.4. The conflict landscape as a transformative arena

“The soldiers are in Yei, taking crops, and the rebels expect people to feed them.

Rebels used to stay with us, youth, because they want to get fed; they make you cook for them and carry things. This is a problem, because when the government soldiers come and see us, they target the youth because they think we are with the rebels. The chiefs are not respected anymore, so cannot do much against someone who has a gun. Insecurity became widespread, as people don't know who to trust. Thomas Cirillo is in the area; he is a Bari from Juba, not from Yei."

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 4/12/2019

The political wrangles between leaders and armed groups have been a source of key conflict streams in South Sudan, which occasionally overflows across internal boundaries and the borders with Uganda. Since the conflict began in 2013, about 70% of South Sudan's national army defected to the opposition side²⁸⁰, which included Thomas Cirillo's National Salvation Front (NAS).²⁸¹ Among the most powerful opposition groups, they did not sign the 2018 R-ARCSS.²⁸² They kept troops stationed behind the hills over Kaya, as the Oraba officers and my interviewee above had told me. Their presence in Equatoria has split opinions among the displaced community, for the same reasons as in when Riek's forces had fled through the region in 2016, turning local communities into a target for their assumed 'support for the rebels' against the government.

Earlier during 2014, battles were fought over the control of the capitals of Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states, and around the oil fields in Unity. Forces said to be loyal to Riek Machar were drawn mainly from defecting garrisons in the three states and some armed Nuer groups from Jonglei. To counter these, and address the depletion suffered within SPLA defection, Salva Kiir received military support from Uganda, as well as the SPLA-North and the Justice and Equality Movement.²⁸³ Kiir also engaged the Dinka youth *Mathiang Anyoor* (brown caterpillar) commanded by Paul Malong.²⁸⁴ Originating from Northern Bar-al-Ghazal, they have been largely deployed to the Equatorial region, where some of research participants had encountered them. Not amused by these armed forces' attitudes and behaviour, a former soldier

²⁸⁰ ICG, 2014. "South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name,"; de Waal, 2014a. "When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent: Brute Causes of the Civil War in South Sudan", July 2014, p. 347-369.

²⁸¹ NAS, to which the group is often referred to, is not an acronym; it derives from the Arabic word *nas*, meaning people. On March 6, 2017, Cirillo announced the formation of the new opposition group (Radio Tamazuj, 2017).

²⁸² Although a small number of defectors did sign the RA-RCSS later in 2018 (Sudan Post, 2022).

²⁸³ Johnson, D., 2014. "Briefing: The crisis in South Sudan."

²⁸⁴ Small Arms Survey, 2014, "Insecure power and violence: the rise and fall of Paul Malong and the Athiang Anyoor". The importance of the Mathiang Anyoor in the SPLA's 2013–2016 offensives elevated Malong's military power, enabling him to challenge Kiir's rule, fracturing their relationship, which culminated in Malong's sacking in 2017, house arrest in Juba, and eventual exile to Kenya.

from Yei who now resides at Rhino settlement, paid particular attention to the *Mathiang Anyoor* as “not listening to community leaders”, and behaving as if they are “at home”.

“These soldiers don’t speak any English or Arabic. They are only talking the Dinka dialect. When they are brought here, they are told that all these states are full of rebels, so they go and kill all the young guys. They come out from the town, they find you on the road, they capture you, put you in the vehicle and take you. Everyday, they are moving, they look at you suspiciously, and they just take you. And most of the people they kill are not even rebels, they are not holding guns. This is a civilian.”

displaced male, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019

Disillusionment with top leadership - especially in the form of directives leading to violence escalation, and mostly from the government side, is a common reason given by South Sudanese for abandoning their positions within the army or government jobs. Ben, Gabriel and Edward, include in their background, having worked for government post-independence. They were turned into targets over their connections and questionable loyalty. Ben, a Nuer, Gabriel, a Dinka, and Edward a Kakwa, however, are examples of the limitation of an ethnic loyalty narrative. Now in Uganda, along with many others in settlements, they remain on guard, aware that the porous borderland and fenceless settlements are no barriers to trouble. The mobility of combatants is an important domain to explore the conflict continuation character of South Sudan. With respect to the borderland management apparatus – seen through examples of the securitisation of the borderland with respect to civilian movements (chapter 4 and 5), suspicious armed actors’ presence and recruitment in the settlements (chapter 6) and cross-border trade (chapter 7), it can also illuminate aspects of interface negotiations often denounced by interviewees as exploitative, rather than attempts to prevent cross-border movements. Elsewhere, ‘circular return’ cycles are used to explain combatant’s pendular state of movement between civilian and combatant life.²⁸⁵ On a conversation with Joseph about the rumours of men from the settlements going back to South Sudan later in 2019 to join armed forces, he concluded that,

“The SPLA is weakened, because soldiers are tired, and there are too many desertions and factions, which do not make a possible unification of forces feasible. This is a complex process with no plans in place. It is very possible that recruitment at this time is taking place, because the delay [of the R-ARCSS] gives the SPLA-IO and others time to recruit, rearm and continue fighting.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵Vlassenroot et al. 2020. “Navigating social spaces: Armed mobilization and circular return in Eastern Congo.”

²⁸⁶Telephone communication, Joseph, December 2019.

6.5. Elegu-Nimule border: dealing with security risks during research

I arrived in Elegu on October 19, 2019, just before sunrise. As I waited for the leader of the women traders' association, a couple of UPDF soldiers approached, interested to know what the white lady is doing here, one of them sitting by my side 'for security'. The Elegu-Nimule border had been the key entry point for South Sudan's economy, and over the years it became heavily militarised on both sides.

Margareth took me to an Ethiopian owned hotel she had chosen, not far from the One Stop Border Post (OSBP), the flagship of trade integration project promoted by COMESA and the government of Uganda. In order to conduct interviews at the border market, Margareth asked me to meet the security official at the OSBP first. At the hotel, it was possible to see the border with South Sudan from the rooftop. Some army and police officers stayed under a large tree, across the hotel. The roadblock they set up is marked by a rope firmly tied around the trees, each on opposite sides of the road leading toward Adjumani.

Figure 11. The roadblock shack as seen from the hotel rooftop.



Author's photograph, October 19, 2019.

I turned attention to the view on my right side, where the official border crossing stood, and over into Nimule, far at the distance into South Sudan. Margareth only showed up in the evening and apologised for being busy all day. She had spoken to the border security officer and told me that first thing in the morning I should go and introduce myself. There was something strange about her initiative to discuss about me directly with the security officer, which meant that things here worked not quite like elsewhere. There also seemed to be a certain resistance to allow researchers engage with the local community. On Sunday morning, at the OSBP, I looked for the said officer, referred to as the BISO – Border Intelligence Security Officer- who is tasked with overseeing the general security of the area. People waited to have their passports and other documents checked in the main lobby area, as the officer arrives and we proceed upstairs to his office. He had an air as if ready to intimidate, and did not act very cordial, but wasted no time bragging about his authority: “I am in charge of all the security in this place. The army, the police, I am above all of them”, he said. After having me call the Centre for Basic Research (CBR) and Makerere University to get my affiliation and permits confirmed, he still proceeded with excuses, intending to block me from conducting interviews. My positionality entered a stage of looking for a compromise at this point, having in mind the discussions presented on chapter 1 and 3.

The tension between us was visible. He had made copies of my research permits, my passport and research details, which could become a problem. By being exposed to such situations while in the field, I had allowed myself to be immersed into the complicated relationships between gatekeepers and researchers, with little room to negotiate. Part of the research meant to illustrate the border dynamics in relation to civil-military, and cross-border economy relationship, had now been compromised by suspicion directed at my interests for being in Elegu. For now, the officer sent me away to seek the “right permission” and then comeback. Margareth seemed to get agitated by the fact that the security officer had not given me permission and was also of the opinion I should not talk to traders in the market. Back at the hotel, the staff noticed something happened, and the incident caught the attention of a male staff . It turned out that early that day in the morning, at around 6 am, a man dressed in civilian clothes knocked on the door and began to ask questions about me. The staff enquired who he was and demanded he showed some identification, which was declined. They told the man they would not give information about their guests. As we talked, the security officer calls me, now with a firm threatening tone: “You have no permission to talk to anyone here in Elegu. I have

put my security to watch you and make sure you don't speak to anyone. They are instructed to arrest you if you leave the hotel to speak to people. I suggest you leave as soon as possible."²⁸⁷

Margareth must have spoken to him about talking to traders, adding to the suspicion against my presence in Elegu. With the officer posing a direct influence to the conduct of field research in the border, I decided not to risk compromising further my presence in the field.

I left Elegu in the following morning, after the hotel staff asked the driver to collect me from the hotel, so not to draw attention. A ride to Adjumani usually costs UGX 20.000, though upon arrival, the driver demanded an extra UGX 5.000, as a reimbursement for the bribe he and the other three South Sudanese passengers had to pay to police officers at the three roadblocks we passed along the way.

6.5.1. Securitisation of research and research sites

The incident in Elegu was a setback for the field research plans, and more so, because I intended for later, to cross over to Nimule to interview South Sudanese security personnel. As communication went awry with the BISO, Adjumani was quickly offered as an additional research site, with the help of commercial officers. At the time, commercial officers were attending conferences in their respective areas, and my first point of contact was Anna. She listened to my summary of the weekend's events and dove into her assessment about Elegu: "They are lying in that place. I know women traders who wanted to do business across in Nimule market, and the border officials demanded higher taxes, when they are not supposed to pay. They just left."²⁸⁸

Unexpectedly helpful, Ana's advice led me to the District Commissioner, to get permission to conduct research in Adjumani. I was however hesitant about interacting with local authorities and planned a more careful approach, though the welcoming could not have been far from the one in Elegu, with the staff spelling out known friction between them. After introductions, I was told by the officer in charge, "You have my permission, and you know that if you do anything outside of research, it all stops".²⁸⁹ Moses – the security officer - had then been assigned to assist me, and partly, because of the problems encountered in Elegu. The predicament of Ugandan security policing the borders, settlements and urban areas that

²⁸⁷Field notes, October 20, 2019.

²⁸⁸Small scale traders fall in the category of those goods worth up to USD 2.000, and therefore, are exempted from paying taxes at the borders.

²⁸⁹Field notes, Arua, 23/10/2019.

normally attract ‘outsiders’, involves a special ability to mediate between South Sudanese State and non-state actors, and civilians in the settlements, many of which have direct familial ties to them. Moses has disclosed, from our very first tour around Adjumani, how security in the settlements has been particularly challenging because of the changing cross-border dynamics between South Sudan and Uganda:

“You know, it is only the security which has been hard. Those Dinkas, they come to me and say, ‘we will come and we want to register. Our children have arrived, and we shall get vaccine, food and some work’. To get food, they are using us, Ugandans. Now, that person comes and buys simsim²⁹⁰ from us because it is cheaper, and then they go back to South Sudan. The wife comes and they register in another camp. That’s the challenge. You find that they register again in different camps. In Palorinya you may find they are getting something. If they have an aunt in Ayilo they are getting something. It has made the population number to go up. These are the challenges we face.”²⁹¹

Moses often talked about how the settlements are filled with the relatives of South Sudanese military outfits, who morph themselves into regular civilians fleeing the conflict along with everybody else. A widely accepted rumour says that soldiers come for a couple of weeks to rest, get fed before returning to South Sudan. And as we often observe in our female interviewees, many were heavily pregnant, while already breastfeeding a small baby. I often asked whether the children were their own, and upon a positive answer, their ages did not match the time the mother had been ‘without a husband’ in Uganda. Moses and others who have long been dealing with the situation, firmly believed that “their husbands are well alive in South Sudan”. Along with the problem of refugee numbers being inflated by the practice of registering at multiple settlements, there is a concern that access to settlements by active South Sudanese soldiers is also aided by the presence of relatives, in turn accounting for occasional violent outbreaks. This reveals another side of a multi-site living based on convenience, where one can ‘keep an eye on’ and ‘collect information’ undetected.

Our assessment of a small group of Peri women from Eastern Equatoria contrasted with the information gathered from the other groups of women, illustrating both the variation and diversity of contextual backgrounds and affiliations. My enquiries and interests on particular information revealed from interviews at Boroli settlement, made both Moses and Otto suggest taking me to a section of the settlement inhabited by the Pari of Eastern Equatoria, where they

²⁹⁰Common name for peanuts.

²⁹¹Private communications with Moses, Adjumani, 23/10/2019.

wanted to introduce me to women that they knew were the wives of South Sudanese army officials. As we approached, the decaying surrounding was hardly avoidable, and Otto quickly pointed out how people thought the Peri a peculiar culture, somehow averse to “modern ways”. I did not want to make an argument about this, and turned to the women, who had been so entertained with the photographs they were looking at, that they hardly seemed interested in my presence.

Figure 12. Group of Peri women, married to active armed actors



Author's photograph. December 13, 2019.

The demeaning assessment given about the group of women contrasted with the scenario in front of us: they possessed photographs of themselves and family members, and during our interaction, expressed having used modern ways of communication, such as the use of a ‘radio phone’, used by the military in South Sudan. The translation via Otto from Pari to M’adi and then through Moses, from M’adi to English was relied on, from which an accurate account was rather questionable, given their negative assessment. Two of the women took the lead in responding to our many questions related to the conflict and military-civilian relationships. “Fighting and hunger brought us here, not the government versus rebels’ conflict”, they both agreed, intending to draw a line between the civil war and localised communal conflicts. Both

had been in the north and came to Uganda around 2014, and unlike others, they did not hide their connections. “My husband is a soldier in Bahr-al-Ghazal. He said the place would be attacked, he sent me to Juba, and from Juba I came here”, one of them explained.²⁹²

Her five children were also in the compound, with two of them young enough to have been born in Uganda. The second woman had also been in the northern states of South Sudan, where she used a ‘radio call’ to communicate with her husband, who also sent her away to Uganda. “When we fled, there were threats along the way, so we moved on convoys” she added, recounting how she reached Ugandan during 2015. “My husband is a soldier in Malakal. He is in the frontlines”, she explained, next to her two-year old child, after Moses had enquired the boy’s age. Having direct relatives, and especially children on Ugandan soil, can solidify claims on access to services and other benefits offered primarily based on gendered notions of women as victims, risking thus, the rise of a new form of cross-border political economy where women become a security liability. As a male South Sudanese had noted, “women are seen as the breadwinners in the settlements, so food and cash go to them as they are registered, while men are seen as taking part in the conflict.”²⁹³ As a subset of complex military-civilian relationships, these transnational structures are also innovating ways to expand the geographies of State-society relationships through the positioning of kin- in this case, the wives of armed actors and extended family members – in the Ugandan settlements.

The women and children in the settlements across South Sudan’s borders, provide men with an opportunity to secure that offspring will carry on their names and familial bonds. What we still need to understand, is how splitting families in such way, affects production and access to services women and children need, as their male kin are away. Additionally, the displaced South Sudanese are not a homogeneous group, and despite categorised as civilians, their intra-group relationships prove more complex, just as the term ‘refugees’ and their relationship with South Sudanese armed actors. The confirmation that active army members keep their families in Uganda, provides utility for the settlements to armed actors and not the least, the South Sudanese State, as it attempts to lay claims over surveillance and of pursuing from among the displaced communities, those it sees as deviant, or a threat to the State.

²⁹²Interview with displaced female, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019.

²⁹³Interview with South Sudanese male, Pagrynia settlement, 05/09/2019.

6.6. Cross-border social linkages

These kind of cross-border linkages that are enabled through the mass displacement of people do not feature on reports, despite local authorities and communities aware of and concerned about armed forces from South Sudan coming to “rest for two weeks, get fed, and return to South Sudan”.²⁹⁴ Much of my time in Adjumani town – a 40 minute drive from Elegu- was spent strolling around with Moses, who had a penchant for showing which houses and businesses belonged to South Sudanese, and often connected to the SPLA. Though this is not necessarily new, what caught the attention of local authorities and host communities is the wealth transfer – and at times the frequency in which this happens- from South Sudan to Uganda, in the form of business investments.

Moses was eager to take me to a South Sudanese shop and hear what the present owner had to say about the war next door. A former army officer – whose ranking he never mentioned- he fled South Sudan after being “ambushed and my driver was killed. The Dinka took my land and sold it for only UGX 50.000”. There is more to this story as, the shop he owns, belonged to his brother, an army commander who was killed by former colleagues who chased him here after he had fled with money meant to be shared among the group. He set up the shop, as a side income. They both hail from the Kuku ethnic group of Kajo Keji across in South Sudan. While the present owner angrily lashed at Dinka soldiers and militias sent to destroy houses and loot civilians, he also bragged about being “very wealthy”, though keeping a low profile in Uganda. Others around have a similar story, though not many elaborate on the nature of their business. To Moses, there is a system whereby relatives maintain business in Uganda on behalf of armed actors active in South Sudan for “safety”, he explains, since “South Sudan is too risky to invest”. Cross-border linkages are formed during transition through war and peace, can thus force us to consider that the profile of border crossers extends beyond those fleeing conflict, and include also, traders and entrepreneurs connected to the military. Merx (2006) observed at the onset of the Sudanese peace process in 2002, how the high permeability of the Uganda-South constituted an opportunity for local SPLA soldiers that control trade in both directions, rather than an obstacle to their freedom of movement.²⁹⁵ Anne Walraet found that there was an additional ethnic element involved in cross-border trade with Uganda, which constituted an economic opportunity seized by Dinka cattle traders that had resettled here due to the war and

²⁹⁴Adjumani, 11/12/2019.

²⁹⁵Merx, 2006. *Refugee Identities and Relief in an African Borderland: A Study of Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan*.

also controlled the border with Dinka SPLA fighters.²⁹⁶ Forms of conduct inherited from the long years of war persist as the official South Sudanese presence represents a “military authority with an individual local hold on power that still relies on coercive structures”, posing a threat to and constraint on Ugandan small-scale traders.²⁹⁷

6.6.1. Variations of the war economy

The mass displacement of South Sudanese to Uganda, means that their movements going on both directions also increases contact between different areas, drawing attention from a greater number of State and non-state actors to traveling routes. All these movements back and forth, of various kinds, motives, and performed by multiple identities, brings to question also, whether territorial control is in fact an end goal, or a means toward the monopoly over the ‘right to tax’ civilian movement. Similarly, the extraction of money from civilians is a feature of the political economy of these borderlands. Key informants and others who suffered great losses, said they understand that armed actors are not being paid, and therefore, resort to setting up checkpoints and roadblocks to extract what they can from travellers. Edward heard about what happened in Elegu and did not look surprised, for according to him and others who shared similar views, “They are scared that you will see what they do in that border”. Ugandan and South Sudanese security structures in the Elegu-Nimule border engage in tax bricolage (Chapter 7) both due to the opportunities the border brings with the multi-directional movement of people, and the economic activities enabled by the war economy. Edward eagerly stressed about the South Sudanese army’s tendency to extort civilians at their own will:

“You see, the army are all corrupted. The general himself can collect the source of the revenue for the army and use it as his own. The government can pay the army, but the money cannot reach the army, because they are paid through the commander. You can take that money and keep quiet. And that is leading to poverty and revenge, because this money has been taken, and there is no accountability. The second thing is that after the collapse of the economy of South Sudan, there is no payment for the army. The person takes his gun and starts looting everywhere and takes everything.”

Edward, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019

²⁹⁶Walraet, 2008. *Governance, violence and the struggle for economic regulation in South Sudan: the case of Budi County*.

²⁹⁷Schomerus, and Titeca, 2012. *Deals and Dealings: Inconclusive Peace and Treacherous Trade along the South Sudan-Uganda Border*, p.7.

South Sudan's economic woes exert increased discontent among those interviewed, from former government officials to the army and the civilian population, who all experience it in varying ways. Disproportionally better equipped with arms and ammunition, armed actors and militias in South Sudan take aim at civilians. As Edward and others often emphasised, there is a chain reaction within this, where the most powerful holds a gun and takes what they want.

Even through the staff at the hotel in Arua, I came to know many South Sudanese regulars at the hotel, among which are also 'brokers' who strike deals between the military and business circles in both countries. One afternoon, as I returned from the field and asked the staff whether they knew any locals who might shed light on South Sudanese army/rebels involved in cross-border trade. "Why don't you ask James, he is back from South Sudan." – one of the female staff suggested. Not knowing whom they meant, I went outside to check and by the entrance door, the regular guest I had observed one day talking to an UPDF major was standing by the door. "I used to import motorbikes from China in containers and sell them in South Sudan", he declared, opening a discussion about the regional cross-border trade and economy. "But with the war, it became complicated. These Chinese motorcycles in Congo are also cheaper, you can get one for USD 1.500, so people cross over to buy them now". James did not mind me taking notes, and neither held back on disclosing his main business activities, and when he asked me whether I knew what teak is. South Sudan's teak forests are said to be the largest and oldest in Africa, planted by the British in the 1940s. "Teak is a very important tree, hard wood. I am in the business of teak trade." The description James provided seemed to have jumped out of documentaries and reports making rounds in the region.²⁹⁸

From his perspective, he sees that "people may call this illegal outside of South Sudan, but these are all the same people here", in reference to historic ties between borderland communities. James threw on a smile when asked about his questionable means to earn a living, just as the former combatants, who are aware of their past in the rebel movement and brush off possible war crimes with lines such as, "during war, everyone is fighting." Communities inhabiting Western Equatoria where the teak forest lies, never see the profits of cross border teak trade. James for his part, alluded to the "unclear import and tax laws", and the high fees "when you have a legally registered business"²⁹⁹, as major disincentives to the formalisation of

²⁹⁸In September 2018, Africa Uncensored released an inflammatory three-part documentary titled 'The Profiteers', which explored the linkages between South Sudan's civil war and the operations of businesspeople, financial institutions and government and military officials in Kenya, Uganda.

²⁹⁹Informal interview with teak 'broker', Arua, 02/10/2019.

the teak trade business. Amid the civil war, national and regional actors have been able to forge lucrative business contracts, and widening further the civil-military relationship, often demonstrating who stands to benefit from the suffering of South Sudanese

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the testimonies of former combatants who, under a volatile and unpredictable situation involving South Sudan, reflected the status of civil-military relationships. Despite being limited to the Ugandan side, the views of former combatants as settlement residents or urban dwellers, proved valuable to dissect the great level of influence State and non-state actors have in South Sudan and beyond its borders. These interviews serve to challenge the generalised notion of an in-group ethnic loyalty and that individuals assumed to be ‘associated with the government’ are privileged. Second, these insights also point towards a poorly explored strand of research about a reversal of power structures and socialisation between South Sudanese groups in exile.³⁰⁰ Ultimately, to address the question on how coordination takes place to guarantee access to services and livelihoods involves delving into the complex web of personal relationships between civilians and active armed actors, something that it was not possible to obtain through the limitations imposed by the research on the topic. What is clear, is that the general focus on myths that tend to glorify wartime heroes and pass an image about civilian voluntary support for armed struggle glosses over deeply fragmented relationships, even from within the army and rebel factions. Through the interviews, it is possible to learn that support to either party is withdrawn, recruitment is resisted, and people relocate across South Sudan’s borders, in coordination efforts that forces a shift in focus to the ‘peripheries’, as spaces where the ‘monopoly over the rights to move’³⁰¹, which deserves further investigation. The relationship between armed actors and civilians has once more undergone significant changes in the post-independence period, marked by remarkable violence directed at civilians – including former combatants - and their livelihoods.³⁰² For these reasons, the line of separation in the way services and food procurement takes place for the army and to the civilian population, requires a revision on how coordination takes place between civilians and

³⁰⁰To be clear, I refer strictly to their condition as displaced since 2013/4, and hence, as South Sudanese people, rather than Sudanese or Southern Sudanese.

³⁰¹Similar to Torpey’s (2000) examination with regards to “*The invention of the Passport*”, the use of refugee and identity cards by South Sudanese who cross the borders on either direction, are embedded on the borderland’s formal and informal surveillance systems.

³⁰²Thomas, 2015. “*South Sudan: A slow Liberation*”; 2019“*Moving Towards markets.*”

armed actors, set against the changes in the social, economic and political landscape composition of South Sudan and its southern borderland. Interestingly though, a policy move by the South Sudanese government emerged in 2020, with the merging of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture ³⁰³, which draws attention to the state of civil-military relationships, the trust issues identified in the present thesis, and how they fit into a complicated developmental process implemented with little knowledge and participation from the communities under which land is taken from and handed to foreign investment.

³⁰³Middle East Monitor, 2019. "*How Israel is sowing the seeds of war in South Sudan.*" <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190906-how-israel-is-sowing-the-seeds-of-war-in-south-sudan/> Accessed April 11, 2022. And OCCRP, 2019. "*Sprouting the seeds of War.*" Accessed July 10, 2022. <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/sprouting-weapons-of-war>

CHAPTER 7

War, Trade and the State

7.1. Introduction

The collateral impact of the conflict not only affects civilians directly, but it also causes major disruptions to trade and transportation routes, as prices go up. Secession and the return to conflict has made cross-border largely implicated in the political and economic development of South Sudan, as markets have struggled, while in-kind aid contributed to destroying the grains trade.³⁰⁴ As the South Sudanese government and the army began organising supplies independently, the population have had little recourse to mitigate against soaring food insecurity.³⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the displaced South Sudanese have become integrated in the borderland's social, political and economic life, and the status of cross-border trade and mobility during conflict, constitute the final topic of this dissertation. South Sudan imports almost everything, and the transnationality of the economy is mostly felt at the Nimule border, where 90% of all imports to the country pass through.³⁰⁶ Two strands of arguments emerged from dialogues with South Sudanese, Ugandans and Congolese who operate in the region and live through the transformations of South Sudan's conflict and displacement. One has to do with border securitisation and the other, with the cross-border economy and movement that includes settlements and the displaced South Sudanese. These transformations occur as part of a new phase in the Uganda-South Sudan borderland's history, and within the logic of war as "the continuation of business by other means".³⁰⁷ In order to visualise and organise the data around selected transportation routes and informal trade in connection to the conflict, the data has been triangulated from multiple sources and locations (figure 13), and it combines first-hand accounts with existing research, reports and documentary evidence, to address the question **how cross-border trade is implicated in the political and economic development of South Sudan.**³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ODI, 2015, p11. *Markets in Crisis*.

³⁰⁵WFP and FAO (2017,2019) studies have shown that food aid contributed to only 3% of household consumption between 2011-2013 (Thomas 2019:22) By January 2020, FAO estimated that 45.2% of the entire population faced food insecurity.

³⁰⁶World Bank, 2011. "*Doing Business in Juba*".

³⁰⁷Bertold Brecht in *Mother Courage and her Children*, 1939.

³⁰⁸Much from the available literature on informal cross border trade between these countries is scarce and unreliable, and for South Sudan. Data on Uganda's informal trade are collected by the Bank of Uganda (BoU) in a joint effort with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) through their Informal Cross Border Trade Survey reports.

7.2. Cross-border trade and movement in the current civil war

The map below (figure 13) is a result of field data triangulation on a) cross-border trade of selected commodities observed b) the multi-direction of trade and mobility that takes place in the context of the displacement and c) the checkpoints cited by drivers/traders when venturing on the road between the Elegu-Nimule border to Juba. Together, they provide a synthesis of lines of investigation pursued, also in line with research interests that emerged on African borderlands.³⁰⁹ With the displacement, the South-Sudanese-Uganda borderland dynamic offers a site from where to investigate State-society relations, through the daily interaction between inhabitants on both sides, and those who represent the State. As Zeller (2015) argued, “the lived quality is what makes the borders real”, and this is how actors also reshape the State. Aware about the regional economic integration momentum for South Sudan, there is a need to pay attention to the Ugandan side of the border hosting a great number of displaced communities (and not only from South Sudan), which might necessitate regional economic and development policies to consider the integration of borderland settlements into their plans. This strand of research then, likens the borderland economy and mobility, to the emergence of multi-site living among displaced South Sudanese in Uganda.

Yet, the diverse accounts presented do not attempt to claim a general representation of the current situation, and much less of a fixed condition in the region’s cross-border economy and movement, as these are very fluid and in constant change. The qualitative tools available - observing the environment and people and conducting interviews - helped make sense of the situation in a very specific period. The fluctuating economy, with much price variation between urban-rural, settlement-urban and ‘north and south’ in Uganda has itself been referred to and discussed in all sites. Besides, being immersed in the field allowed me to also observe the disproportional socio-economic living conditions at various locations along the borderlands. Traveling on public transport, paying for accommodation and food at different locations made me aware of price differentiations and the impact they have on the regional economy at large. In the next sections, I unpack the findings that emerged from this exploratory research.

In Arua, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with South Sudanese and Ugandan drivers, traders, and Ugandan commercial officers, with a focus on displaced livelihoods were

³⁰⁹Research interest in African borderlands contributed to the creation of the African Borderlands Network (ABORNE) in 2007.

conducted, as they relate to cross-border networks of survival. Together, they inform on the habits of border crossers, as they perform important tasks within the supply and demand chain servicing South Sudan. Information was also gathered on cross-border mobility and the politics of transportation systems between Uganda going to South Sudan, and between settlements and South Sudan.³¹⁰ Movement is endemic to the lives of populations who adapt to different types of displacement (Raeymaekers,2014b; CSRF,2018; REACH, 2020), and thought must be given to how displaced livelihoods are affected and how existing markets can adapt to a condition of long-term displacement.³¹¹ Taking risks to access food markets and consumer goods has become a central part of South Sudanese life³¹², and it is connected to the narrative of the Ugandan-South Sudanese border as a lifeline also to the displaced. It places the Ugandan neighbour as an essential partner to cater to the needs of many South Sudanese. Besides, all kinds of consumer goods which make their way from Uganda to South Sudan reinforces market relationships in times of conflict and frequently cross the border to Uganda, to access basic services such as medical treatment and schooling which to date remain scarce in South Sudan, and not least, because of the conflict. These cross-border movements ultimately helps situate the practice of *multi-site living* among displaced South Sudanese, on the basis of socio-economic needs. The mass displacement to northern Uganda, especially during 2017, initiated thus a new phase of the borderland's transformation into a hub of social and economic activities built on top of existing ones.

³¹⁰A version of this chapter was adapted and presented at the ABORNE conference on September 10, 2022, under the title "The State of Mobility and Trade in the Ugandan-DRC-South Sudanese Borderland". https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a44f918f9a61e04cdd5d717/t/62fcd641f6a2a7012fde8b11/1660737090162/ABORNE_2022_Preliminary_Program_8_17_22.pdf

³¹¹Thomas, 2019. "*Moving Towards Markets*". The shift to producing food for markets rather than for home consumption, is said to have turned food into a commodity, and farmers into wage workers, and hence, responsible for South Sudan's hunger crisis.

³¹²Rift Valley Institute's series on Displaced Tastes, 2020; "*Migrating with Seeds*", and "*Conflict, Mobility and Markets*", among others, discuss the evolution of food preferences in South Sudan.

Figure 13. Transport routes and cross-border trade of selected commodities.



As an auditor from the Ugandan Bureau of Standards (UBOS) explained, when research is conducted on informal trade/economy, only registered traders and businesses are consulted, which makes it impossible to document and account for variations, changes in volume, or the scale of trade. The lack of data concerning the number, nature and frequency of cross-border traders and their movements, seems to treat them as a homogeneous group, and data comes from borders, in the form of flows and stock. “This is a problem when consulting the same traders over and over again, as there is no data representing the small and medium-size traders”³¹³, many of whom are also refugees. The broader process of State-making that has engulfed cross-border communities, still bears strong connections maintained and reinforced by a long-history of cross-border mobility, wars and displacement (chapter 4). South Sudan’s predicament as a country in conflict cannot be ‘seen’ or understood from within only; the margins have shown to be more important to the State-making project, both as a source of revenue and in the management of movement. The division of boundaries and borders, as well as contradictions in defining the borderlands make the commodification of human mobility

³¹³UBOS official, private communication, Kampala, 09/10/2019.

profitable under a system of ‘transit tax’ further exploited in the context of displacement. This affords great significance within the policy environment created to impose South Sudan’s new internal boundaries, which by extension, attracted also new revenue collection points.

Uganda’s interest as South Sudan’s major supplier of goods and services had been engineered with South Sudan’s government to ensure Ugandan traders in South Sudan can conduct their work free from harassment. It is no coincidence that Nimule border was revitalised after 2011; its shorter and strategic position makes it possible for goods coming directly from Kampala and the port of Mombassa in Kenya to reach Juba, the seat of the Government and the military.³¹⁴ On the other hand, it rendered the border highly dangerous for small-scale traders, borderland communities and passengers traveling on either direction. The Elegu-Nimule border is prioritised as the site of contestation from below, to the imposition of border securitisation.

7.2.1. Development during the inter-war period [2005-2013]

“I think South Sudan became dependent on Uganda.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 06/09/2019

Beyond this, when the topic is the economy, South Sudanese reeled from having watched the economy in disarray at a time it had hardly taken off, which contributed to xenophobia against merchants from neighbouring countries.³¹⁵ The broad scope of topics and concerns addressed by KKIs, signalled changes during the transitional period (2005-2011), which initiated in Southern Sudan, the task to develop a rudimentary economy, among other institutions.³¹⁶ Procurement policies were usually assigned to a handful of individuals tied to the ruling elite, many who were later cited in reports published by The Sentry.³¹⁷ The CPA provisions on wealth sharing and revenue collection (chapter III) enabled multiple revenue collection practices

³¹⁴Reports on the networks between South Sudanese businessmen and the politico-military elite and their Ugandan and Kenyan counterparts (The Sentry 2016, 2019; The Profiteers, 2018) show how luxury goods and services pass via the routes controlled by GoSS and allies.

³¹⁵IRIN, South Sudan-Uganda: Economic migrants battle xenophobia, 30 January 2012. Accessed November 17, 2022. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4f281582.html>

³¹⁶A study by AfDB (2013) identified South Sudan’s trade with neighbours are asymmetrical and assessed its export potential.

³¹⁷Radio Tamazuj, 2020. *UK sanctions Sudanese businessman Al-Cardinal for dubious deals in South Sudan*. Accessed March 25, 2022. <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/uk-sanctions-sudanese-businessman-al-cardinal-for-dubious-deals-in-south-sudan>; The Sentry report, 2019. *South Sudanese skirting sanctions*. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://thesentry.org/reports/south-sudanese-skirting-sanctions/>

(Twijnstra,2014), against the expectation of those who developed and signed these agreements. Mobility patterns that made the development of a parallel trade in the background of the 1980s economic crisis possible, had driven a great number of traders into the informal sector. The cross-border trade that intensified in the late 1970's was also aided by refugee movements (Meagher,1990, 2007; Titeca,2009) and many border markets in the region had been established by refugees. After more than five decades of war in Sudan, the Arab trade route that ran north-south was cut off, and cross-border trade in the South began to bloom in the period between 2005-2009. Described by traders as 'the golden period', it was the result of aid and oil money flowing in with little checks and balances (Twijnstra,2014; Twijnstra and Titeca 2016). Transnational trade in the post-war period, offered opportunities to re-establish contacts and relationships between communities previously cut off by conflict. Though with many unresolved grievances and on-going pockets of violence, the risk of trade fuelling tensions and adding to conflict dynamics is very real.

It is common to find South Sudanese expressing resent over the way in which peace seemed to have brought markets under the "control of foreigners", who flocked to Juba to open businesses. Some explain this by saying South Sudanese "are not interested in doing business because they like the ready-made".³¹⁸ Along with unequal terms of employability and service provision vis-à-vis non-South Sudanese, came also, the notable rise of the checkpoint economy in the period 2005-2009, with traders paying up to 16 taxes along the roads in 2008 alone.³¹⁹ On the eve of 2011, a survey was commissioned to quantify the cost-to-market access of both formal and informal checkpoints along trade routes in South Sudan (SSNBS,2011). It found that for every 100 km travelled, there were 4 checkpoints, with those in the northern routes reaching 7 checkpoints per 100 km. Unreceipted payments consisted of a greater portion of all checkpoint payment. More recent research (Matthysen and Schouten,2021) counted 319 checkpoints within South Sudan, a decade on since independence. The monopoly generated around cross-border trade and movement along the Nimule-Juba highway alone has turned it into "the world's most expensive roads"³²⁰, only behind Afghanistan and DRC. The rise in this type of non-oil economy has had a significant ripple effect on the transportation and trade

³¹⁸South Sudanese trader in Uganda, Adjumani, 23/10/2019. These views were also expressed during other interviews with both South Sudanese and Ugandans.

³¹⁹New Vision, 2008. *Traders pay over 16 taxes in Sudan*. Accessed August 28, 2022. <http://www.newvision.co.ug/detail.php?newsCategoryId=220&newsId=645116>

³²⁰Matthysen and Schouten, 2021. *The political economy of checkpoint in South Sudan ten years after independence*. Accessed August 11, 2022. <https://ipisresearch.be/publication/checkpoint-economy-the-political-economy-of-checkpoints-in-south-sudan-ten-years-after-independence/>

sector, which has been co-opted into the security sector, by providing both the army and rebel factions with revenues. As many interviewees continued to experience in South Sudan, situations where armed men “make customs” at the roads, and everybody who wants to cross must pay”³²¹, where prices may vary according to type of transport, produce/products, volume and overall cost of merchandised being transported. The 192 Km Juba-Nimule highway was completed in 2012, funded by the US. It connects Juba with the Ugandan border of Elegu, where it meets the Kampala highway.³²² As secession turned South Sudan a landlocked country, access to the East African markets became essential, and traffic has been on the rise since the only paved road into South Sudan was converted from a dirt track road.³²³The government has moved to centralise its import-oriented transportation system to South Sudan via the Kampala–Nimule–Juba road, though quickly after 2011, trade between both countries took another turn, due to the increased market competition and fear of conflict in South Sudan after independence having reduced incoming trade volume and revenue.³²⁴

“In these roads we have a lot of difficulties, mostly on the South Sudanese side. When you are going to the border, these checkpoints in Uganda can ask you how many sacks you have, you give them the details, they will write it down and allow you to go. But in South Sudan, those who are there are determined to get something from you. Even when you go to the office and pay the necessary fees, when you come out with receipts, and you reach the Gordon checkpoint at the mountain, from there they ask you for something, to show that you have been cleared.”

driver #2, Arua,23/09/2019

The checkpoint economy that visibly spread in South Sudan since 2011 is not only how State and non-state actors at the margins and along roads collect taxes from civilians, but more generally, how they keep a check on the profile of mobile individuals and draw them into the national political economy status. The bewildering status of people involved in tax bricolage at the expense of those who need to cross into South Sudan, leaves Ugandan drivers and traders with no other option but to pay multiple unofficial fees, citing personal security as a concern. The relationship between drivers and border officials who regulate and manage cross-border movement between Uganda and South Sudan, has changed and became more fluid in recent

³²¹Interview with South Sudanese male, 07/09/ 2019.

³²²Formal shipments through Elegu border used to be handled in the town of Bibia (about 10 miles away) until February 2012.

³²³South Sudan became Uganda's leading export destination in 2008. When fighting broke out in December 2013, a steady decrease from US 414 million in 2013 to US 353 million in 2015 was recorded. See MTIC, 2016. “Statement on the status of Ugandan traders in South Sudan”. Accessed August 30, 2022.

<https://www.mtic.go.ug/statement-on-status-of-ugandan-traders-in-south-sudan/>

³²⁴ International Alert, 2014. *Trading with Neighbours*.

years, requiring thus an ability to negotiate the movement of goods and people using a repertoire of localised knowledge of the volatile relationship between people on both sides of the border.

7.3. Transportation systems I: From Arua to Juba

Do you still think it is worth doing what you do? I asked one of the seven drivers interviewed at Arua's transport association, after making a quick calculation about the profitability of transporting goods from Arua to Juba, a 10-hour journey on average.

*"We just do the transport, and the prices depend on Juba, what the currency fluctuation is, so whatever they charge us here, we get [back] in Juba. We cannot set a price beforehand. A sack [of produce] is around UGX 80.000, then you fill in fuel, then you have the money for clearance and bribes, and then you remain with some UGX 300. It is very difficult to determine how much you will make in each trip."*³²⁵

driver #1, Arua, 23/09/2019

Joseph, a South Sudanese friend, had already taken me to Arua's transport association site in town, from where he buys his tickets to travel to Juba overland. The stretch between Nimule and Juba has become incredibly risky after 2013, with attacks on buses and smaller vehicles a frequent occurrence. The terrain in which transportation systems operate have also attracted a higher contingent of police and military officers who set up roadblocks to control the movement of civilians, goods and cargos, each demanding a fee from drivers.³²⁶

³²⁵At the time, the drivers said they could fill 11 sacks of produce at UGX 80.000 each, in their small vehicles and transport these to Juba.

³²⁶The spread of checkpoints continued during 2020. See Eye Radio, 2020. *Travelers witness more illegal checkpoints across the country*, November 12, 2020. Accessed July 18, 2022. <https://www.eyeradio.org/travelers-witness-more-illegal-checkpoints-across-the-country/>

Figure 14. United Juba Transporters Association



Author's photograph. Arua, 23/09/2019.

For this segment of research, unstructured interviews were conducted with drivers in Arua who are hired to take goods to the markets in Juba, such as KonyoKonyo, Customs and Nyakuron. In the context of the civil war and the displacement, the role of transporters by and large helps mitigate against staple which has become unavailable in South Sudanese markets.³²⁷ They also form durable relationships with retailers and businesses in South Sudanese markets, a vital position in the cross-border trade. Most drivers know the geography, the business terrain, their costumers and supplies since around the time of South Sudan's independence, and have thus, formed a repertoire of knowledge that comes with the hardening of the Uganda-South Sudanese border, and especially, the South Sudanese State as it tries to establish itself as a source of power and revenue collection in the margins. They are less likely to establish relationships with South Sudanese officials in Nimule, county officials and non-state actors they come face-to-face with along the Nimule-Juba highway, indicating the full range of socio-political negotiations that dictate economic governance in this area.³²⁸

“The relationship between the Ma'di on both sides is positive, with the problem being SPLA at the border. These are brought from elsewhere and they don't speak the local languages and do not have relationships with the local Ma'di communities on both sides.”

³²⁷These are mainly potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, matoke (green bananas), green peppers, cassava and onions. South Sudanese and Ugandan in Juba place their orders via mobile phones to the drivers in Arua.

³²⁸Such as referred to by Twijnstra, 2014, p25.

driver #1, Arua, 23/09/2019

To conduct their risky business, they have become skilful in conflict mitigation, developed from interface interactions with border officials and security personnel, as well as road bandits along the roads. While interaction with border officials on the Ugandan are mostly straight forward and both sides often negotiate on payments, once drivers cross into South Sudan, the situation changes, as explained below:

“The CID³²⁹ and the police in South Sudan tell you they will do A,B,C. You tell them what you need and don’t have. There are officers who at times are hostile, so building relationship with them is very hard. If they tell you they want this amount, they don’t want any negotiation. And if you go on talking to them, as if you want to negotiate, it can turn into violence. Only sometimes, others are good, if you try to talk to them and say I have only this much money, they will understand.”

driver #3, Arua, 23/09/2019

Tax revenue collection from the movement of vehicles and of people that cross the border of Elegu-Nimule has brought great profits to SPLA officials. Historically, the Acholi inhabited this area even before colonial administrators have drawn the borders in the end of the 19th century, and the Ma’di have co-inhabited Nimule since. Twijnstra (2014) refers to the “Ma’di corridor” as Nimule was known, to indicate how the group had established themselves working in this Acholi dominated border town by the time of South Sudan’s independence. Between these two groups, he argued, tax payments were determined by the type of personal relationships one has with the tax officials. Currently, the norms and rules established on such relationships- informing how much and how many taxes one has to pay- are fluid and subject to change at any time. South Sudanese State agents and the SPLA manning the border in Nimule derive largely from ethnic Dinka, according to which, drivers insist that it is SPLA soldiers “brought from other parts of South Sudan to Nimule we have problems with”.³³⁰ The multiplex relationships of Nimule residents and State officials – The Ma’di, Acholi and Dinka – have been inscribed to the social and economic governance of the border over the years after South Sudan’s independence, and have thus being added to the constellation of actors whom cross-border traders and drivers must negotiate access with.

As interface negotiations changed, with drivers adding that the “person which you get at the checkpoint, is the person which you are going to clear your goods”, in reference to both the

³²⁹This is the Criminal Investigations Directorate.

³³⁰Interview with drivers, Arua, 23-24/09/2019.

constant rotation of officials, and the lack of ‘fixed taxes’ to pay for particular goods and volume ³³¹, the outcomes of this socio-political negotiation process, extends beyond the personal and professional sphere of the State official. As a safety mechanism, cash is reserved to pay off border security agents, road bandits, and armed groups who line up along the road. “We speak the same language, Arabic. When you are going you have to prepare something for them”, referring to the South Sudanese government soldiers.³³² The frequency of movement and locales where negotiation take place, have been affected during the conflict, and may account for the reduced number of monthly trips drivers conduct. Now they say they go to Juba between three to four times, transporting an average of 10x50 kg sacks of produce. In their attempts to address insecurity along the highway, they try to join convoys – of mostly large trucks carrying petrol and other valued goods coming from Eastern African countries through the northern transport corridor - which are exempted from the type of inspections and additional charges levelled to other categories of drivers.³³³ The situation aggrieves small-scale traders and independent drivers who find it difficult to follow the convoy along the Nimule-Juba highway.

“The security situation is about 50/50. Because when we used to travel up to Juba before, we moved with the convoy. Now, we have some difficulties. By the time we arrive at the border, we cannot catch up with the convoy. So that forces us to go alone without protection. Whenever these gunmen come on the road you have to stop, and you have to comply with them. Most of the time when they come to the road, they will pick your money, and sometimes your phone.”

driver #2, Arua, 24/09/2019

Left to venture on the road to Juba on their own, drivers remarked that “We are useful meat now”, having become a magnet to actors with whom they negotiate the payment for access in no less than five locations before reaching Juba. These checkpoints were cited as located in Nimule, Mount Gordon, Aswa, Nyolo and Nesitu, along the Nimule-Juba highway (see figure 13).³³⁴ A recent fatal incident which sparked a major strike in Elegu, was still much talked about among the drivers who blame South Sudan’s government for the lack of security on the roads: “You find that with the South Sudanese government nothing is permanent. The government can say one thing, but the soldiers, the rebels, you never know who you will get on the roads”.³³⁵

³³¹Interview with leader of Arua driver’s association, Arua, 23/09/2019.

³³²Interview, driver #6, Arua, 24/09/2019.

³³³For a detailed account of how foreign traders fit into the cross-border economic regulation dynamics, see Schomerus and Titeca, 2012.

³³⁴I drew a map by hand and asked interviewers to indicate the order of these checkpoints. Variations in the spelling of the names of these locations occurs.

³³⁵Driver #4, Arua, 24/09/2019; For the incident referred to, see:

Generally, drivers understanding that the trade deficit in South Sudan has contributed to Ugandan traders becoming a target as they bring in much needed foodstuff and other goods. What has caused added concern, according to the drivers, is that GoSS prioritises the security of large convoys carrying high valued goods. South Sudanese traders interviewed in Arua offered a mixed account about the impact of the conflict to cross-border trade. They argued that the conflict itself does not hinder the normal routine of cross-border movement and service delivery however risky it may be. It is when another factor comes to inhibit movement, that obstacles cause problems and reshape social and economic habits.

“Security is a major determinant, and it goes with health. When the area is healthy enough, it cuts down some costs. Let me talk about Congo, where there are cases of ebola. Infections that really degrade the health of the Congolese, including the traders, and it affects the service providers and many traders decided to leave their costumers and go back to their countries. We fear going to Congo, simply because of those issues.”

South Sudanese trader, Arua, 22/08/2019

Especially during my first month in the field, the Ebola outbreak – which by September 2019 saw a few cases in Uganda, was part of the reasons why mobility seemed to have decreased. On top of this, fighting between armed forces in South Sudan in October 2019 in Yei, forced the interruption of the Ebola containment activities. Soon after, three IOM volunteers were killed in Morobo near the border with DRC.³³⁶ These events, though not related to the topic at hand, incur great losses in the conduct of cross-border economies.

7.3.1. Transportation systems II: From Ugandan settlements to urban markets and to South Sudan

To those whose cross-border movement experiences are met with the hardening of the borders, the channels in which profits are made through the commodification of human mobility have fallen under the radar of the displaced South Sudanese, who are aware about how border authorities use their positions to extract fees from those who depend upon moving back and forth from the border. As one category of cross-border movements, South Sudanese with refugee identity cards, and those familiar with border agents can negotiate better their ‘illegal’ movements, as opposed to those who do not have such an established relationship. Both

<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/truck-drivers-end-strikes-att-uganda-south-sudan-border->

³³⁶IOM, 2019. “IOM Condemns killing of aid workers amidst deterioration of security situation in Morobo country”. Accessed October 2, 2022. <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-condemns-killing-aid-workers-amidst-deteriorating-security-situation-morobo-county-south-sudan>

categories can offer variations in the experience of *multi-site living*. Overall, the location of the settlements makes displaced households better positioned to mobilise transportation and resources from and to South Sudan.

In Bidibidi settlement's zone 1, a group of South Sudanese maintain a transport association, to bring in goods from various urban markets to the settlements, and to transport passengers between settlements and urban areas. Bidibidi's transport association connects South Sudanese to Juba, either physically or in the form of goods brought in from markets in the capital, which ironically, have their origins elsewhere, including Sudan. The small vehicles are mostly hired privately, by individuals who perform short trips to South Sudanese destinations. Largely as an effect of settlement residents' limited purchasing power, some drivers wait for days until the volume of costumers is enough to compensate the long and costly trip to Juba, usually a 10-hour journey.³³⁷

Figure 15. Transport price list from Bidibidi zone 1

PLACE	PRICE
JUBA CITY	95,000SHS
KOBOKO TOWN	11,000SHS
YUMBE DISTRICT	5,000SHS
ARUA DISTRICT	18,000SHS
NIMULE	50,000SHS
MÓYO	20,000SHS
INVEPI CAMP	18,000SHS
RHINO CAMP	25,000SHS
MOROB	18,000SHS
ADJUMANI	25,000SHS
OBONGI	20,000SHS
PAKELE	30,000SHS
JP	40,000SHS
LODONGA	8,000SHS

Author's photograph, Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019

³³⁷Private communication, Bidibidi settlement, 28/20/2019.

Two members of Adjumani's Nimule taxi stage reinforce these views by explaining how the transport system is geared to profit from the movement of displaced South Sudanese back and forth across the border: The drivers call officials at the border to organise passage of certain goods and passengers, so when they reach Elegu, money is paid to facilitate the movement in a speedy way. On certain occasions, passengers leave the shared taxis in Elegu and cross into Nimule on foot, telling border officials they are just going to the market, which on discretion affords them free passage. They then return to the taxis and continue the journey to Juba.³³⁸

The commute between Ugandan settlements and towns also requires significant efforts and transaction costs, with a higher proportion spent on transportation. Residents at Rhino settlement, a one-hour drive from Arua, often pay UGX 12.000 each way to travel and acquire goods from town, compared to residents in Bidibidi who need to disburse between UGX 20.000 and UGX 30.000 to travel to either Koboko or Arua. Because Yumbe district is distant from the settlement's 'entrance', the transport arrangement is split in two; between the settlement and Yumbe and between Yumbe and other urban areas.³³⁹ These costs justify in great part the reason why, despite abundance in the markets of Arua and Koboko, they become cost-prohibitive to most settlement residents, especially those on a monthly cash allowance of UGX 31.000.³⁴⁰

³³⁸Interview with KKI, Adjumani, 23/10/2019; Interview taxi drivers, Adjumani 22/10/2019.

³³⁹A boda-boda ride from Yumbe to BidiBidi's 'reception' point in zone one, a journey that can last 30 minutes, costs an average of UGX 15.000 one way, but can be negotiated to UGX10.000.

³⁴⁰The figures here represented, are from 2019. At the time, refugees were given UGX 31.000 per month, or UGX 1000 per day, which at the time was equal to USD 0.5. Since then, cash allowance and food ration have been reduced twice during 2020, and in South Sudan, WFP has announced it on June 14, 2022, that it was forced to suspend food distribution due to funding crunch.

Figure 16. Arua taxi stand connecting the town with the settlement.



Author's photograph, Arua, 28/08/2019.

These urban-settlement relationships can be identified as by-products of the merging between displacement and State-building, where insecurity on one side becomes tied to the development prospects in the other side. With the current displacement, regular patterns of cross-border trade collide with new ways of directing mobility via the introduction of border control systems, and making thus the management of people, a more lucrative venture than preventing cross-border mobility. Previous studies in these borders showed how control systems stir up processes by which State-making hinges from the economic viability of the borderland (Zeller,2013,2015) and may prove counteractive to the weight people place on livelihoods over their experiences with violence. An intensified commercial arena, where markets have become more complex is also skewed towards the settlements (Action Against Hunger,2017). This exposes the inconsistency between urban - settlement purchasing power in Uganda and may explain why most South Sudanese in Uganda keep a foot on both sides of the border to benefit from aid, while full repatriation remains threatened.³⁴¹ This strategy is not new, though it is set against a volatile regional situation with regards to refugees and IDP numbers not receding, but being added to unemployment statistics in Uganda, DRC and South Sudan. The local poor and the

³⁴¹Action Against Hunger, 2017. "Bridging the Gap". Similar observations were made earlier by Kaiser, 2010.

displaced inhabit an environment ripe for tensions, and politically charged against ‘aliens’, in a pattern that repeats itself since the rise of refugee populations in the aftermath of the colonial period.

Where different forms of movement intersect in northern Uganda, the situation casts focus on how these spaces are mutually shaped and reshaped by communities whose livelihoods depend on the ability to move, and they are indicative of the kind of relationships that emerge between the periphery and the centre. At the same time, transportation technologies and new border management systems attract businesses and services mushrooming in the peripheries and are thus also important in facilitating the practice of *multi-site living*. In respect to the entanglement this has created between the civil war in South Sudan, the displacement that followed and the ‘re-imagining’ of the South Sudanese State from the borderlands, people actively engage with alternatives to economic and social conditions, to maintain access to the State.

7.4 Moving business across the border

Access to livelihoods and markets constitute a key incentive for displaced South Sudanese to practice *multi-site living*, with a more permanent presence in Uganda. On November 5, as we made our way to Mungulla settlement, along the road from Adjumani, we passed by a petrol station in construction. “That’s a South Sudanese man, he does not believe peace will come and is investing here”, Moses told me. In this part of Uganda, the landscape looks increasingly dotted with South Sudanese setting up more permanent structures. Many come directly from Kajo Keji, a formerly important town bordering Moyo in Uganda, left in ruins after GOSS soldiers turned on the community. “Everyone has fled to Uganda”, and where possible, “their businesses went with them”, Moses continued during our walk in Adjumani a few days after our visits to the settlements. The enormity of the human resource scarcity problem of South Sudan cannot be denied, and my interest on cross-border livelihoods brought me to speak more informally to South Sudanese residing in Adjumani, most of whom originated from Kajo Keji and have moved back and forth during both countries’ turbulent past.

Figure 17. South Sudanese shop in Adjumani town



Author's photograph, Adjumani, November 5, 2019.

In Adjumani, the need for markets attracts traders and smugglers who help maintain the informal economy, symptomatic of the high influx of displaced South Sudanese. Contrary to expectations, the urban market area is “dead”, according to Moses, due to a combination of high taxes to maintain a stall/shop, and the poor development of roads connecting the settlements and urban areas, which makes transportation costly, and access limited. Through observation and interaction with traders in the market, they illustrate the inconsistencies between economic activities in town and in the settlements. South Sudanese demand for their own products, also create an incentive among traders to get products brought in from across the borders. While Uganda may declare certain products illegal, these have been crossing borders for a very long time, to everyone's knowledge, as much as they show a resistance to the imposition of higher taxes and/or a ban that came because of South Sudan's independence.

7.4.1 Adjumani's smuggle economy and challenges in supplying the settlements

“Cooking oil from South Sudan is cheaper and more in demand than Ugandan oil; people collect empty jerrycans with Ugandan brand names on it, and then proceed to fill them with South Sudanese oil, bought at an average of UGX 20-25.000 cheaper than they would cost in Uganda.”

trader, Adjumani, 23/10/ 2019

Smuggling is also vital in the supply and demand chain, as even the most basic of items are traded within the network. At different areas in the Adjumani market, imported products can be found, and the economic activities are conducted, bypassing Ugandan laws. Some people might not fully disclose the nature of their businesses, Moses often warned me, noting that town traders “are very suspicious of Kampala people sending investigators here”, referring to the UBOS team who recently conducted checks in the region. We entered a few shops owned by South Sudanese from Kajo Keji, who displayed items in demand within the South Sudanese community. These items are smuggled and kept hidden from view, because they are “banned by the URA”.³⁴² The unique circumstances in Adjumani when compared to other urban areas in West Nile, means that the market struggles with high population influx and demand for food and non-food items, on a low base purchasing power. To counter this, smuggling activities and the informal nature of trade is deemed almost essential so that the displaced population and host community can survive.³⁴³ And as traders attend to the consumer demands of South Sudanese along the borderland, the economic incentives become more conditioned of the permanent presence of displaced communities in Uganda. The increased demand has generated a re-orientation of supply routes from Kampala, directly to some of the settlements.

Figure 18. smuggled items from Sudan.



Author's photograph. Adjumani, November 2019.

³⁴²South Sudanese trader, Adjumani, November 11, 2019.

³⁴³Interview with trader, Adjumani, 08/11/2019.

One valuable example comes from another shop owner who first came to Adjumani in 1989 and had gone back to Southern Sudan in 2009, only to return when “things collapsed there”, by December 2017. The rural-urban exchange in Kajo Keji (in South Sudan) ceased during the current war and forced almost everyone to cross the border to Uganda. With the settlements created around Adjumani, and their respective displaced residents in need of purchased goods, the town traders noted a shift from supplies coming from Kampala to Adjumani, towards supplying the settlements directly from Kampala.

“Indian suppliers from Kampala make competition very hard, because not only do they supply Adjumani directly as wholesalers, but they also go to the settlements. Therefore, town businesses lose the opportunity to supply settlements.”

South Sudanese trader, 11/11/ 2019

Collectively, traders note that Kampala suppliers are contracted by the government of Uganda, who offers Indian nationals a tax-free interest for up to three years to start a business. “How are you going to compete with someone who doesn’t have to pay taxes to do business?” they pointed out.³⁴⁴ The scramble among Ugandans and foreign nationals in the ‘refugee industry’ does not escape local and national headlines when scuffles emerge.

7.5. West Nile as the regional hub to South Sudan

The OAU has mostly failed to achieve cohesion and integration among its members, on the issue of borders, on the basis that African leaders perceived this as a threat to the material and symbolic resources they derive from the borders (AUBP 2013, Okumu, 2009). It has since, recognised the need for political and economic integration, with substantial investments made in recent years, on infrastructure development across Africa. Greater integration efforts now render many border crossings more visible through new roads, bridges, the One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs)³⁴⁵ and checkpoint facilities (Nugent and Soi 2020). Asymmetries between the borderland’s settlements and the central State is however, influenced by deeper historical trajectories and contemporary patterns of trade and population movement. Uganda’s West Nile region has been a hub for cross-border social, economic and political relationships, cementing

³⁴⁴A similar view was also expressed in Arua, by the chairperson of business community, November 21, 2019.

³⁴⁵For general information on the project, see African Development Bank, 2018a. “*East Africa’s One Stop Border Post Project.*” Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/east-africas-one-stop-border-post-project-18611>

its importance during the past century (Leopold,2005,2009; Schomerus and Titeca, 2012; Meagher,1990). In general, African borderlands have experienced a revival in academic interest in the past decade, also reflecting their centrality to regional systems of trade and the rapid growth of border settlements (Nugent and Soi,2020).

In Arua, it was possible to investigate how people obtain their livelihoods, as the city has for long attracted migrants, refugees and Ugandans from other parts of the country, with its well-established trade network with Juba markets. Trade visibly overwhelms Arua, especially along the main Adumi road and its adjacent streets. By the end of 2019, there were no less than 7.000 traders competing to make a living from their small-scale businesses, according to Arthur, Arua's commercial officer. The new market under construction, however, will have the capacity to support 5.000 traders.³⁴⁶ The demand for goods and services is also explained as a response to security concerns beyond Uganda's borders, that accounts for Arua's bloated urban population size.³⁴⁷ The chairman of Arua's business community explained that in more than thirty years of conducting businesses in the DRC, small scale traders remain averse to the prospects of paying formal and higher taxes. "Arua is a hub in the region because DRC, South Sudan, CAR capitals, and even Kampala are farther away from most people in these borderlands".³⁴⁸ Similar to previous studies (Titeca,2009) this kind of business behaviour suggest that traders and local communities have more to gain from their under-the-radar activities than abiding to formal regulatory frameworks. Arua's proximity to the Congolese borders of Vurra and Ondramachako makes them an important conduit for cross-border trade and smuggling activities.³⁴⁹ The regional trade integration promoted by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, and COMESA, with the active involvement of commercial officers, who apply the language of formalising trading activities, in this case, through the One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) rolled out at strategic border crossings between Uganda and its neighbours.³⁵⁰ While concerns about Eastern DRC and South Sudan's insecurity are part of the agenda, the pitch is to highlight the benefits in conducting trade directly at designated borders,

³⁴⁶Interview with commercial officer, Arua, 22/09/2019.

³⁴⁷Interview with the mayor, Arua, 18/09/2019. In 2014, Arua's local population was 782,077. By midsummer 2017, it was adding 900 to 1000 people every day in Imvepi (adjacent to Rhino settlement) before that settlement was closed to new numbers, topping out at 123,019. See Action Against Hunger, 2017, p6.

³⁴⁸Interview, Arua, 21/11/2019.

³⁴⁹Especially Ondramachako, which is the second biggest informal export point and third most important import point with the DRC. See UNDP, 2020. "*Informal cross border trade along the Uganda-DRC border*".

³⁵⁰Nugent and Soi (2020) researched the impact these new structures (OSBPs) bring to the borders between Ugandan and Kenya. I am grateful to Prof. Nugent for an important exchange of ideas on the different characteristics between the 'eastern borders' of Uganda and those I have observed.

where small-scale traders could be offered better protection against exploitation.³⁵¹ With the purpose of reducing transit time and costs for cross-border movements by integrating customs processes of border agencies of two neighbouring countries in one place, OSBPs are also meant to mitigate risks to public security and revenue collection.

However, attempts to harden any border between Ugandan and Eastern DRC or South Sudan, are met with fierce resistance from traders and local communities, but also, of businessmen who capitalise on loopholes in the regulation of trade of certain commodities.³⁵² Of the six borders observed in this research, four of them are between Ugandan and DRC. With the geographical security makeup of Western and Central Equatorial states in South Sudan inhibiting transportation across enemy lines, South Sudanese trucks divert via Eastern Congo and reach the Ugandan borders of Vurra and Ondramachako,³⁵³ both a short distance from Arua. At Ondramachako, the Ugandan immigration officer welcomed us under a tense environment between border officials and the communities on both sides of the border. There, two petrol stations face one another, symbolically signposting Ugandan and Congolese territory. While the price of petrol on the Congolese side is UGX3.800, across the road in Uganda, it was sold at UGX4.200. This type of business is associated with businessmen who are also familiar with the borderland communities' limited resources, and thus capitalise on the mobility needs of everyday border crossers by offering options through price differentials. The caveat, as explained by the immigration officer and Arthur, is that both petrol stations are owned by the same businessman, someone "above the law". This strategy also caters to the mushrooming boda-boda transportation system, where drivers benefit from crossing the border to fill in their tanks at a lower cost and return to Uganda. As a political strategy, such businesses benefit from drivers rallying behind them whenever threats to shut it down emerge, or the URA/ Immigration officials attempt to invoke laws and extract legal fees.³⁵⁴ At times, while visiting border posts, the hostility and resistance from security officers was clear, while on other locations, the notion of a cross-border network of collaboration was evident, and fairly

³⁵¹MTIC, 2018. "Uganda and DRC sign Memorandum of Understanding Establishing a Bilateral Framework for Enhancing Cross Border Trade", 20 July 2018. Accessed August 16, 2022. <http://www.mtic.go.ug/uganda-and-drc-sign-memorandum-of-understanding-establishing-a-bilateral-framework-for-enhancing-cross-border-trade/>

³⁵²For an illustrative example, see WWF, 2012. "*Timber movement and trade in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and destination markets in the region.*". Accessed August 27, 2022. https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/regional_timber_movement_and_trade_summary_englis_h.pdf

³⁵³Some variations of this spelling include 'Odrachachaku' elsewhere in the literature. From Arua, both borders are about 25 minutes away, and were accessed by boda-bodas.

³⁵⁴See UNDP, December 2020. "*Informal Cross-Border Trade along the Uganda-DRC Border*".

explained without reservations. Further down in Nebbi, Arthur and I had gone to meet the COMESA officer we had met before during a bilateral conference between Congolese and Ugandan government officials and small-scale traders.³⁵⁵ The Goli-Mahagi border, one of the busiest transit points into DRC, is located at the axis linking Arua, Bunia (DRC), with the port of Mombasa (Kenya) along the Northern transport corridor. As we arrived, a long line of fuel trucks, a some filled with can and bottled drinks waited to get paperwork checked before proceeding to DRC (Figure 13). The official promoted the language of the formal rules and regulations set out by the EAC trade integration project. Yet in front of us, a South Sudanese “mobile clearing agent” who “deals with paperwork” for truck drivers coming from DRC and South Sudan, does not shy away from declaring his presence and purpose by saying, “I do not have an office. I go where clients are”.³⁵⁶ He came to the border to deal with the paperwork for the timber which came from South Sudan, had been offloaded next to the bridge on the Uganda side, and was now being loaded onto a different truck to proceed to Kampala.

Figure 19. Goli-Mahagi border: Suspected South Sudanese teak transported through DRC



Author’s photograph, November 2019.

³⁵⁵ Conference held on 22/11/2019 and attended by the author and Arua’s commercial officer.

³⁵⁶ Personal communication, 22/11/2019.

For those in the business of timber trade, diversion through DRC roads is a necessary step to circumvent either the closure of, or transit through ‘enemy lines’ in the Kaya/Oraba border.³⁵⁷ In examining the value of formalising trade activities- and concentrating them in the margins- it is important to consider who does and who does not benefit from such projects. Though this type of economy is also firm within militarised political economy structures (Keen 1998; Roitman, 2005; Rolandsen 2019; Pendle and Anei, 2017; Raeymaekers, 2009), situations such as in the above scene indicate how diversified cross-border networks of collaboration are, and that finding out the about the origin of the timber pallets and the nature of this trade is a difficult process. While in the nearby police post, the officer said he had only been in his post two weeks and could not be familiar with the dynamics of the area, the URA officer in the office declined to comment and suggested I get clearance to obtain information. Upon seeing my papers, he still declined communication, and also denied knowing James, who had just told us he was “with the URA”.³⁵⁸ Though not all borders might form a direct connection to the war economies of South Sudan, some of them are clearly exploited by ‘brokers’ – such a James - whose contacts lists include Ugandan and South Sudanese border authorities and government officials on both sides.

7.5.1. The re-orientation of the supply and demand chain in the political economy of trade

The South Sudanese conflict also played an important role in bringing about a shift towards markets, when powerful individuals in the army manipulate conditions to attract them to areas away from the ‘centre’, Pendle and Anei (2018) found that some chiefs were able to recreate quasi-urban areas in order to attract trade and populations, by using their contacts within the political and military circles. While interests vary, and local elites may have reevaluated their power strategies downwards to their home areas, the pull factors for traders and civilians are more fluid. South Sudanese households which have lost land and livestock because of displacement, rely mostly on paid agricultural labour, which may shift at any time between Ugandan settlements and South Sudan, aware that harvested areas declined as a result of the conflict. In South Sudan, this has also probably deepened reliance on imported grain from

³⁵⁷In a 2012 report by WWF, Goli is cited as one of many borders where illegal timber from South Sudan is transported through. Accessed August 21, 2022.

https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/regional_timber_movement_and_trade_summary_englis_h.pdf

³⁵⁸Field notes on field visit to Goli border, 22/11/2019.

Uganda (Thomas, 2019), assigning to markets, the ability to reshape aspiration by pushing people towards towns, where patterns of accumulation often favour military entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the proximity of the settlements to porous borders and Nimule is exploited by UPDF and SPLA factions, who transport mainly timber and charcoal (Figure 13).³⁵⁹ At the time of field research in Adjumani, Moses, had shown a photograph on his mobile phone, which followed an incident involving the use by armed forces of a boat belonging to a humanitarian agency, to transport timber into South Sudan.

“The SPLA and UPDF transport timber in and out of South Sudan, using the boats in the river. We know this because one night, the boat got stuck and we were called. They could only move after unloading some of the timber.”

Adjumani, 23/10/2019

The monopoly by the military is such, that Moses added, “you cannot have a business if you are not a soldier”.³⁶⁰ Another factor that contributes to resource mobilisation concentrated in the hands of the political and military elite in South Sudan and shields them from the problems that befall the civilian population, is the grain imports to feed the military. Since 2013 the South Sudanese army has been organizing their own food supplies, as a result of not having paid Ugandan traders, who then discontinued contracts.³⁶¹ In a damning report by The Sentry (2019), South Sudanese politicians and military officers are reported to have paid over US 80 million to relatives who owned companies and work for government agencies, to have them contracted for military transport and logistics. Through multi-millions dollar contracts to usher food, logistics and military supplies to the army, cross-border trade is also co-opted into conflict continuation in South Sudan.

On October 10, I was on my way to meet officials from the MTIC. The senior commercial officer insights concurred with observations made about the asymmetries in access and transport in northern Uganda and the informal links between the armies and businessmen in forging private arrangements of grain supplies. The SPLA is “known to be sourcing grains privately by using Ugandans to pose as contractors”, since the South Sudanese government is in a bad light for having defaulted on payments years ago.³⁶² With such concerns in mind, they

³⁵⁹Namu, 2018. *“The Profiteers”*; C4ADS, 2020. *“Money Tree”*.

³⁶⁰Interview, Adjumani 23/10/2019.

³⁶¹International Alert 2014. *“Trading with neighbours.”*

The Sentry, September 2019. Businessman Kur Ajing received millions of dollars from the army in order to procure food supplies to them, and in return, paid a percentage of the contract back to senior South Sudanese government officials.

³⁶²Interview, senior commercial officer, Kampala, 10/10/2019.

see cross-border markets – with trade concentrated at the border, and not beyond- as a response to such problems Ugandans have faced in South Sudan, when they lost billions of Shillings in 2014. The South Sudanese government, in response to the internal status of food availability due to displacement and decrease in production and market availability, has also moved in to raid the Equatoria region, known for its food production capacity, to cut off any attempt of the region to feed the opposition (Craze,2018). A report from The Sentry found that some of the companies supplying food aid to South Sudan are regional, yet none can operate inside South Sudan without political backing from within the government, and that inevitably means payoffs to individuals within the political administration.³⁶³ The disparity between access to and control of supplies, much of which exacerbated during the civil war, has incurred significant pressure on the majority of Equatorian population fleeing to Uganda.

7.6. Fragile relationships in Cross-border Trade: Gulu to South Sudan

The liability caused by South Sudan’s conflict situation and the mistrust of its government for not honouring contracts it had made with Ugandan suppliers, caused a retreat from conducting businesses in Juba. With Gulu situated along the Kampala-Juba highway, it has been revived from the destruction the LRA war brought on the Acholi population, to become a model of infrastructural and economic development in the northern region. Many banks moved to northern Uganda too, transforming Gulu into a hub of investors. During the years South Sudan emerged from decades of war itself, Gulu ostensibly tapped into the demand from Southern Sudan for servicing and repair.³⁶⁴ However, several businesses remain cautious about making long-term investments in Southern Sudan, preferring to establish their bases in northern Uganda. According to Gulu’s commercial officer, trade relationships with South Sudan have been mostly marked by hostility and occasional violence on South Sudanese territory, which makes the case for efforts to establish markets at border areas instead. Sustaining similar views as those from his colleagues and the Ministry in Kampala, the contention that South Sudan emerged from war as an uneasy trade partner is widely acknowledged:

³⁶³The Sentry (2018) report “*Fuelling Atrocities: Oil and War in South Sudan*”, portrays the analogous means by which these payments are made.

³⁶⁴RVI, 2018. “*Mobility and crisis in Gulu Drivers, dynamics and challenges of rural to urban mobility.*” Accessed September 3, 2022. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/files/2020/02/Mobility-and-crisis-in-Gulu.pdf>

“Ugandans doing business in South Sudan feel worried about the hostile environment. The answer is to boost markets at the border, where people can interact, instead of risking going to Juba. Drivers are equally scared of going to South Sudan.”

Gulu commercial officer, 12/11/2019

Later in the evening, the head of the chamber of commerce showed up. Validating the views of the commercial officer, he emphasized how Gulu has turned to South Sudan’s Eastern Equatoria State, with plans underway to boost the market supply to South Sudan. Still, he warned that conducting trade across the border is risky, and especially for small-scale traders who are less protected. As for the attitude of South Sudanese, he laments the way in which relationships have soured with their neighbours in recent years. “You cannot be seating somewhere, dressing too smart and enjoying a cigarette. They would come over and ask you, ‘what are you enjoying? You haven’t fought for this peace’”.³⁶⁵ Somehow, the change of heart from welcoming Ugandans and other African nationals and foreigners in South Sudan, turned into resentment over the years, when such investments did not translate into an improved quality of life for South Sudanese. Ugandans know this from experience, and the commercial officers seemed to agree that the deterioration of living standards and security in South Sudan, turns Uganda into a magnet for marginalised South Sudanese. Compounded with other regional dynamics in the region, trouble along trading routes (ACLED,2020) rather than the centre, has become symptomatic of the South Sudanese, and other regional conflicts, by attracting State and non-state actors.

7.7. Transforming the borderland and shaping the State in the context of displacement

“After Kaya became weak and the government shifted to Nimule, all these things coming to South Sudan come via Nimule, that is why the government is having a very good income. All these foreigners coming through the border need to pay taxes, fees, and that’s why the two governments are getting good money. When you cross into South Sudan you have to pay, and when South Sudanese are coming to Uganda they also have to pay. That means the two countries are getting money. And that is why the Government of Uganda has been entrusted with us being foreigner, from South Sudan, because there are too many crossing the border. South Sudan became a very good market to Uganda. I think South Sudan became dependent on Uganda.”

displaced male, Bidibidi settlement, 09/09/2019

The thesis associates studying about cross-border trade and mobility to studies about the State, since taxation is intimately associated with State-making processes. A western framework, to

³⁶⁵Interview with Commercial Officer, Gulu, 12/11/ 2019.

borrow from Twinstra (2014), may imply that places like South Sudan and some of its neighbours provide a challenge to economic models and notions of political processes that underpin the emergence of State institutions, and hence, our thinking about what constitutes State-making otherwise. The argument that State-induced displacements are an integral practice to modes of State-making (Hammar,2008) and that mobility is behind the shaping of institutions and activities (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015) is very strong in the case of South Sudan. Indeed, one can raise the question on whether the government strategies to force mobility/displacement can have the results of building a stronger or weaker State. The very emergence of PoCs in 2016 is directly tied to the increase in dependency in food aid, as symptomatic of a long conflict from which South Sudan turned from household food production to reliance on food markets (Thomas,2019). In the context of population displacement – especially during 2017 when it peaked - the substantial volume of people crossing the border to Uganda created thus a unique scenario to the country’s post-war context.³⁶⁶ To give an illustration, the displacement from South Sudan to neighbouring countries had reached 1.6 million people that year, with 1 million fleeing to Uganda alone. From a country that estimates a total population of 11 million, this makes South Sudanese the largest refugee population in proportion to a whole. The dearth of farmers, the disruption of internal trade networks and market systems left a persistent productive deficit, caused inflation to soar on top of sub-national conflicts.

On-going border closures with Sudan were also frequent during 2017-2018, while negligible cross-border trade with Ethiopia, together with instability along the border with Kenya, mean that “the road from Nimule to Juba became a vital transit route for the supply of food and petroleum into South Sudan”.³⁶⁷ Cross-border trade and transportation systems can be equally integrated in these processes of negotiations and compromises, often under the threat and use of violence. The traders and drivers interviewed for this research, shuttle from one side of the border to the other, facing many challenges in between, and evaluate the risks of every journey. Their livelihoods, are also now contingent on the bloated demographics of the borderland, increased with the influx of displaced South Sudanese and Congolese, and also, of the

³⁶⁶UNHCR (2017) declared in March 2017, that the South Sudanese refugee crisis was the world’s faster growing.

³⁶⁷REACH, 2017. “Situation overview: Cross border displacement into Uganda via Nimule”. Accessed September 2,2022.https://www.impactrepository.org/document/reach/0be7ae12/reach_ssd_situation_overview_nimule_feb_2017.pdf

‘hardening’ of the Ugandan-South Sudanese borders entry/exit points, a result of infrastructural developments addressing security concerns to implement regional trade integration.³⁶⁸

7.8. Conclusion

An important lesson that emerged from this strand of research is that on-going insecurity in the borderland due to the conflict in South Sudan, does not equate with less mobility. The status of cross border trade is also framed within discourses about State-making and regional economic integration, where insecurity and economic pressure reflect in the way South Sudanese move between settlement and their places of origin. The displaced South Sudanese form also a contingent of communities that have been added to the informal cross-border trade and movement where different interests and needs converge. In this web of movements of people and things, the transport and trade sectors involving both countries are also implicated in financing conflict actors. Further asymmetries between markets and livelihood systems in the urban and settlement environment, as well as the mobility of diverse groups, are formed on the basis of cross-border relationships at the margins of the State.³⁶⁹ Recognising displacement as a form of movement that is integrated in cross-border trade can improve an understanding of how the current wave of South Sudanese displacement transforms the social and economic functions of the borderland. This in turn, is informative to local and transnational development planners, so that future cross-border markets do not fall into the trap of servicing regional elites at the expense of compromising local production systems tied to the security and mobility of vulnerable communities.

The assessment of how cross-border trade might be implicated in the way South Sudan’s develops thus contributes to an important set of social and economic issues. How products move from producer to consumer, who these actors are, and what specific functions individuals in the cross-border networks perform, are only superficially examined. The full extent of cross-border dynamics could include qualitative research in the markets and transportation routes that connect to Juba and beyond.³⁷⁰ The conflict continuation status of South Sudan, and its

³⁶⁸An explanation widely provided by Ugandan civil servants, COMESA officials, commercial officers and seasoned traders and businessmen interviewed.

³⁶⁹A similar example is discussed by Vlassenroot and Raeymakers (2005) in relation to Eastern Congo.

³⁷⁰A start has been made by RVI series ‘Displaced Tastes’, a research project run in partnership with the Catholic University of South Sudan. The project examines the changing tastes for food in South Sudan in the context of economic transition in the regional, cross-border economy of grain. See “*Trading grains in South Sudan*”. Accessed September 11, 2022.

<https://riftvalley.net/publication/trading-grains-south-sudan-stories-opportunities-shocks-and-changing-tastes>

cross-border effects, does not impair 'business as usual'. Rather, to address security concerns, policies and practices are being introduced to foster trade along the borderlands, rather than further inland, in this case in South Sudan.

CHAPTER 8

General Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

In January 2020, in Arua, Joseph had come back from Juba and called me over to tell the latest details about the political situation in South Sudan. I was toured around what was becoming Joseph's new home. "I sold my plot of land in Juba" he tells me, and he had by now formalised his intention to have a permanent home in Arua, where plots in this side of town go at UGX 13 million. The builders were on site, and we all ate lunch together under a tree. Joseph's new neighbours are also South Sudanese, who have permanently settled in the expanding new neighbourhood beyond Ediofe. Eager to find out about the possibility to go to Juba soon, Joseph warned me that "everyone's mind is now focused on this peace agreement coming next month, it is best not to go there now". Disappointed but not surprised, I decided to prepare for a break and return later in May 2020, unaware about the looming global pandemic.

Figure 20. Joseph's home under construction among other South Sudanese homes



Author's photograph. Arua, January 6, 2020.

At the time, the opportunity to explore further the disjuncture created between displacement in South Sudan and its impact on State-making, were captured right in front of me, in the above picture. Both the settlements and urban centres such as Arua, and also Yumbe and Adjumani where higher numbers of displaced South Sudanese were observed, constitute the social and

economic transformation and development of the borderland between South Sudan and Uganda. Joseph of course belongs to a different category of people pushed away from their land due to long term insecurity and economic hardship. Ethnographic moments such as these, captured with the intimacies of particular conversations, still provoke deep thinking about the way forward in research about displacement and State-making processes in this region. At the start of 2020, an estimated 19.2 million people were internally displaced due to conflict across Africa³⁷¹, with 10 million made refugees, and the majority found in the Great lakes and the Horn. Uganda continues to host most refugees – 1 million South Sudanese out of an estimated total of 1.5 million currently residing in Uganda³⁷². Meanwhile, South Sudan has the largest number of refugees and IDPs in proportion to a whole population of about 12 million. Reviews about the causes of displacement in continental Africa point to conflict as a primary source but there are other reasons too.³⁷³ According to an IDMC report (2020), there were 271,000 new conflict displacements recorded in 2020 despite the signing of the South Sudan peace deal in September 2018. About 1.4 million IDPs people lived in camps throughout the country because of the conflict at the end of 2020 alone, demonstrating that despite multiple agreements signed, they have not correlated with significant returns.

This dissertation concerned primarily, the experiences of South Sudanese displaced by the 2013-2020 civil war and considered its implication to notions of State legitimacy more broadly, where the South Sudanese elite utilises displacement as a political and policy manoeuvre, to capture and manipulate assets. Studying the effects of, and what is produced by displacement (Chapter 4 and 5) is thus important to understand several aspects of governance, livelihoods systems (mobile and otherwise), and what may account for changes to social and economic ties in times of disruption. For one, South Sudan inherited displacement-related land disputes from the transitional period (Badyei,2014) and these became even more persistent, as the displacement of individuals gradually turns into permanent occupation. (Justin and Van Leeuwen 2016; Justin 2020). The impact caused by the creation of additional states exacerbated both internal and external displacement, and additionally made people more dependent on markets at either side of the border. With the use of coercive displacement as a method to construct a State built around channelling the movement of people away from access to their livelihoods, we can question the viability of the South Sudanese State from angle still poorly

³⁷¹Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020.

³⁷²The accuracy of total refugee numbers is however disputed and should only be taken as a reference.

³⁷³For example, the 2020 floods in South Sudan were particularly destructive, and the IDMC recorded 443,000 new displacements due the floods.

explored. In the context where multi-site everyday mobilities continue and emerge as new patterns, the agency of displaced South Sudanese (O’Byrne and Ogeno,2021; Vancluysen 2021) is important for the ability to adapt and apply strategies to carve out a living under uncertainty.

Second, many South Sudanese in Uganda have given up returning permanently to South Sudan, and this is informed mainly by parents who stress that children can access school in Uganda – with English as the language of instruction - as well as health facilities. With respect to the observation that individuals within a family unit perform occasional trips between Ugandan settlements and their places of origin in South Sudan³⁷⁴, micro-level cases shed light on the cross-border movements of South Sudanese, to understand motivation and how these movements are performed and negotiated, showing a rather well-established pattern. This forms the basis under which the concept of *multi-site living* emerged during the lifecycle of the research. The study also contributes to a borderland perspective of State-making, as it helps to map out the new phase in the life of a borderland subjected of colonial abuse, experiencing a period of significant oblivion while Uganda, DRC and Sudan fought their wars nearly simultaneously, to later become an arena of recognisable importance in the years that followed the transitional period (2005-2011) of Sudan/Southern Sudan’s war, and in particular, South Sudan’s independence in 2011. The multiplier effects of war, displacement, relocation and formation new territories and identities have engulfed the region for the most part of the 20th century, making the region known as West Nile an intense arena of contestation between external attempts to transform these areas into homogeneous administrative units, in an attempt to emulate European State-making experiences.

8.2. Reflecting on the research questions

To gather adequate and satisfactory data to answer the main research question, I acknowledged the need of breaking down themes and their sub-topics through the use of four sub-questions. I attempted to answer these in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, through qualitative techniques such as ‘follow the people’, ‘follow the thing’, and follow the story’ (Marcus 1995). Recognisably, with much data variation and limited access, the extent to which the South Sudanese displacement shapes the formation of a particular type of State is defeated by the limited scope,

³⁷⁴Not every South Sudanese goes back to check their homes. Some need to go to Juba for healthcare or to seek jobs, so the need to account for variation could also enrich further analysis.

and sometimes access restrictions for adequate data collection. Though the sample was never intended to be largely representative of a whole, key lines of argument repeated by diverse sources in several locales were identified as expressions of the wider conflict and displacement situation, and their effects on people and the environment. On the historical context, it is of great value to research participants to evoke past details of cross-border relationships such as intermarriages and trade, to issues involving contemporary boundary demarcation. Old colonial attempts to define local inhabitants according to territory still blend with how people make claims over territorial stretches along the Uganda-South Sudan borderland, a renewed dispute accentuated with South Sudan's independence. The GoSS, while promoting the dislocation of civilians from areas it vies to control and exploit, makes use of rhetorical speech to gain support for its policies, stretching the State-making process via a "population engineering". What I attempted from Chapter 4, was to bring attention to a view of the South Sudanese State from the borderland where most displaced have fled to, casting an interest to explore the borderland's history up to present time, in relation to the centre.

First, the description made on Bergman and Longsdale (1992), of the State emerging simultaneously from a "conscious effort at creating an apparatus of control" and an "historical process whose outcome is an unconscious and largely contradictory process of conflicts, negotiation and compromises between diverse groups", fits a description of the current South Sudanese State to the extent where power dynamics and violence are the focal point. The new State of South Sudan is being consciously designed, structured, and organised as a power³⁷⁵, and the central government tries to "buy off peace" to steer off competing powers.³⁷⁶ Although the mechanisms that make possible the making of a South Sudanese State today are also fluid, and more like "an idea, a set of practices and processes constantly changing overtime (Leonardi,2013). Within this process in South Sudan, the movement – or migratory biography – of people are very important; both to determine what direction the State will take in the long-run with regards to its own citizens, and whether the population affected by displacement will disengage from the centre all together, to form new organised structures.

³⁷⁵Chevillon-Guibert, 2013. *State Building in South Sudan: A Sociology of the New Administrative Elites*. *Afrique contemporaine*, 246, 53-80. Accessed October 2, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3917/afco.246.0053>

³⁷⁶Thiong, 2018. *Buying off elites to stop fighting won't work. Here's what might*. *African Arguments* March 12, 2018. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://africanarguments.org/2018/03/south-sudan-buying-off-elites-to-stop-fighting-wont-work-heres-what-might/>

Second, my approach to the research questions comes from the paradoxical State-society relationship in executing mass population displacement while attempting to build a State “from scratch” in South Sudan. Hence, the main thesis question explores the displacement situation – although only through a subset of the population - during South Sudan’s 2013-2020 conflict. Along with the four sub-questions, they are foundational to research about the formation of the modern State and its diverse societies that challenge the notion of a fixed State, as the vanguard of such studies have framed these within a type of ‘social contract’. In South Sudan, nothing of the kind can be said to exist, as the persistent situation of population displacement provides visible proof of the disjuncture between Eurocentric ideals and the non-western forms of social organisation and governance. There can hardly be a South Sudanese whose life has not been touched by displacement – with many experiencing repeated displacement- however short or long-term. Being on the move is an important part of livelihood systems in the region, even before the region became known as South Sudan, as detailed in Chapter 4, and explored further in the current context of displacement in Chapter 5.

The independence of South Sudan in 2011 tested the region against a long history of violent conflict, where States emerged not as democratic institutions but as assemblages of autocracies, some brutal others more moderate, though nonetheless, using State power to advance private interests. The initial violence that marked the beginning of the December 2013 civil war, displaced 1.7 million civilians³⁷⁷, primarily from Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states. Large scale corruption and the increased privatisation of State resources for personal benefit have become very common. And with the purpose of sustaining a neo-patrimonial web of dependent and dependable clients to maintain control of the State, the exclusionary nature of who belongs and who does not is reinforced through policies and politics canvassing for an ‘ethnic majority’ rule. Examples of these were found everywhere in the research sites and interviews – where it is quite possible to identify where people have fled from and who they are.

8.3. Overlapping movements

In the present research, overlapping cross-border and internal movements (in Uganda) were observed and concluded that, despite insecurity and attempts to prevent the cross-border movement of selected groups of South Sudanese, the borderlands between South Sudan and

³⁷⁷Figures as of December 2015. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Accessed November 3, 2022. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/south-sudan/>

Uganda – and to a certain extent, DRC - are intensely crossed, built on long term historical transnational relationships involving cross-border movements, trade and forced migration. The proximity of the settlements to the borders has turned them into points of reference to the borderland itself. Such findings also concur with those of Vancluysen (2021) and O’Byrne and Ogeno (2021), whose recent research identified continuity in cross-border mobility among displaced South Sudanese. Although among displaced South Sudanese, two key movements were identified (Chapter 5), these are mixed with regular cross border and settlement-urban movements of traders, and other regional migrants, to the extent that any firm categorisation is not possible to make. The fact that refugees who possess identity cards perform cross-border movements – which violates the condition of their status- leaves a sizeable gap in knowledge about why and how people perform such movements. These in turn, overlap with other types of movements i.e. of traders and contracted truck drivers and local commuters, with the latter representing a category of border crossers from which the displaced can easily mix with, and often move unnoticed.

From these mixed and multi-directional movements, the research identified how the displacement transforms gender roles. Women and children form most of the settlement population, having taken on additional responsibilities in order to earn their livelihood in Uganda. With variations however, some women-headed households enjoy the support of kin who remained in South Sudan were found in a much better state than others who, in few examples, have broken ties with their husbands and family in South Sudan. Uneven opportunities to cope with the impact of displacement are an important part of this research and could bring in more details on how South Sudanese grapple with the situation as they try to rebuild their lives. Parallel to this, attempts by State authorities at various borders to control and exploit the movement of displaced individuals and of traders and transporters, by imposing taxes and bribes, while non-state actors collect bribes along the roads inside South Sudan, gave rise to an economy that thrives on the continuous movement of people. Checkpoints and roadblocks serve also as a security measure to screen individuals, especially ethnic South Sudanese, who might be assumed to belong to either of the conflict parties.

8.3.1. The influence of State and non-state armed actors on displaced communities

The relationship between State, non-state actors and the civilian population is fraught with challenges as the SPLM is the main institution in South Sudan, and political power is disproportionately concentrated within Juba and those who remain loyal to Salva Kiir.

Additionally, investigations from the UN Panel of Experts (2016,2017), The Sentry (2018, 2019), The Small Arms Survey (2019,2013,2011), among others, have all examined the financing channels used by the government and opposition forces to wage war and tried to uncover those profiting from South Sudan's conflict. To the extent that armed actors' actions and activities impact civilian modes of production and access to market, there is a consensus about the productivity gap created through forceful displacement (FAO 2017,2019), and the observation that such deficit has caused armed groups to "attack civilian livelihoods" (Thomas, 2019). The point of reference much described by those I interviewed on the civilian-military relationship largely frames the displacement of civilians to the productivity deficit in South Sudan:

"You cannot see anything coming from South Sudan because all the people who work in agriculture are now in Ugandan settlements. Those who remained behind, these are the army, and they cannot cultivate, they cannot do anything about food."

displaced former combatant, Bidibidi settlement, 29/10/2019

In this regard, the lines that separate how access to services and food procurement takes place has also been transformed and continues to shape the relationship between the armed actors and civilians, and thus, raises questions about coordination to access livelihoods and services (Chapter 6), to answer more precisely who stands to benefit from these activities. From their places of refuge in the settlements, South Sudanese are not entirely free from the reach of State and non-state actors, as I had experienced myself through another example of an ethnographic moment with Yohan. In this case, the South Sudanese army finds itself 'present' in the lives of defectors and those who resisted fighting, via 'spies' who keep their eyes on selected individuals in the settlements. Interviews with former combatants and those assumed to be associated with the government simply because of their ethnicity, showed that they can also be the targets of violence and exclusion while stigmatised over their past actions in their places of refuge. This is relevant to the extent it can inform on the limits of what does being a refugee or displaced person entails. For one, the displaced are not a homogeneous group and the notion of refugee settlements as safe spaces – and especially the Uganda refugee regime within this realm - is clearly diminished. Unfortunately, as it has been explained on Chapter 6, lack of access for research in Elegu and research in South Sudan due to political tensions, impacted the planning and likely results of a fully explored research. A perspective from across both

sides of the border would have enriched debates on the status of such an important, yet fragile relationship.

8.3.2. *Multi-site living as a response to displacement*

As the theoretical and empirical endeavour draws from studies of ‘mobility makes the State’ (Quirk and Vigneswaran 2015), the research journey concerned studying how individuals and groups move, with the aim to examine how displacement is overcome through mobility patterns that feed into societal development, and challenge notions of a fixed type of social contract. Joel Quirk’s personal advice during the early stages of research planning suggested that “a cross-border framework which grapples with why and how people are moving, and why and how regional states seek to direct their movements, could be really useful”³⁷⁸, inspired the preliminary questions developed. Though relative to what I had in mind at the time, I could not have imagined that looking on the effects of the South Sudanese displacement, the empirical analysis would direct me precisely towards a framework which goes beyond an unhelpful reification of lines on the map. The notion of a *multi-site living* strategy among displaced South Sudanese – many whom interviewed for this project, also did not possess a refugee identity card – developed during field research and continued towards the (unintended) final weeks in the field, with Joseph’s decision to build a permanent structure in the Ugandan side of the border, though still open to work in South Sudan, where family members remain. This framework is distinguished from other type of temporary ‘back and forth’ movements in the study about displacement, in that significant numbers of South Sudanese are opting for a more permanent stay in Uganda – and largely doing so in their own terms. Key to this, has been the varied experiences of cross-border movements among the displaced interviewed, which strongly demonstrates that it is not possible to ‘group them together’ as homogeneous, in the sense that all experience equal levels of deprivation or are met with equal opportunities to rebuild their lives.

To the affected population, the likelihood of return to South Sudan will be very difficult to materialise. Such a pessimistic outlook will require a more pragmatic approach, and with the Ugandan settlements taking the form of city-like structures, becoming the permanent dwelling for many South Sudanese is very sound. The displaced in the borderland also remain entrusted to South Sudan and Uganda, yet with their own strategy of multi-site living. To add, mobility

³⁷⁸ Personal communication, January 29, 2019.

in times of conflict and insecurity, has not stopped, and the movement of resourceful individuals continues to be the most significant factor in the formation of the South Sudanese State and its societies, whose development hinges on the informal economy, and of cross-border economies (Chapter 7). The realisation *that multi-site living* is more conducive to the present situation of South Sudanese – either IDPs or refugees - reinforced the theoretical endeavour of “Mobility makes the State” that drove me to address the paradoxes of displacement and State-making (Hammar,2014), in a conflict-continuation context. In sum, this dissertation offers a new angle from which to explore and analyse modern State/making processes.

This is further noted under COVID restrictions imposed from March 2020, and the global impact of funding shortfalls to food distribution among displaced populations. Despite strict movement prevention measures, which in Uganda, were particularly concerned with the West Nile region, the sudden cut on food ration provided by WFP, may have further influenced the decision of some settlements’ households to return to South Sudan temporarily.³⁷⁹ As the situation still evolves, it may take time for a robust analysis of this kind to be added on debates about cross-border movement triggers, their duration and likely impact on permanent border movement control structures, and how the South Sudanese State responds to this. All of this matters to how researchers come to engage with the practical tools that test a rigid definition of a refugee and a displaced person, and by extension, what either group can and cannot do.

8.4. Studying the South Sudanese displacement to understand the State

The four empirical chapters offer a way of assessing - however limited - the complexities in the recent history of displacement within the wider literature of South Sudan’s war to peace transition. The paradox between State-making and the mass displacement of South Sudanese requires us to closely analyse this dynamic. Contrary to dominant monocausal theories of State which form a link between territoriality and a static society, the history of societies whose

³⁷⁹ This observation does not include an analysis about the effectiveness of cross border movement restrictions under COVID. Further remote communication with key informants on the ground during 2020 and 2021, however, confirmed reduced mobility, though noted that “people are still crossing [to South Sudan and back]”, as result of WFP’s funding crisis which saw refugees’ monthly ration down to 60% of a full ration. The first cut came in April 2020, followed by February 2021. See WFP 2021, *WFP cuts refugee’s food rations in Uganda as funding declines*. Accessed February 26, 2022. Accessed May 30, 2022. <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-cuts-refugees-food-rations-uganda-funding-declines>

identities have been linked to Sudan, Southern Sudan and now South Sudan continues to be under transformation, as much as the idea of the State itself, under continuing construction. As a latecomer in the process, South Sudan's attempts to lay down lines on the ground attests to its industrious capacity, although turning it in the focus of internal conflicts that further exacerbate displacement. From the independence of South Sudan in 2011 until 2015, South Sudan consisted of ten states, with each state subdivided into Counties, Payams and Bomas (TCRSS,2011).³⁸⁰ When the October 2015 and January 2017 decrees which increased the number of states to 28, and later to 32 were justified on popular demand for 'decentralisation', it became clear that Salva Kiir had departed from the policies outlined in the 2005 ICSS, and later, in the 2011 TCSS.³⁸¹ South Sudan's administrative centralisation largely concentrates economic activity within Juba, which is the site of most economic development. As South Sudan's second presidential elections – the first since 2010- has been re-scheduled from 2021 and 2023 to take place in 2024, Salva Kiir is eager to have displaced South Sudanese return 'home', in time to vote.³⁸² This can be seen only of tactical importance, given the status of relationship between the central government and the majority of those displaced across the borders to Uganda, originating from the Equatoria region, to whom the State deems 'foreigners'.

The present situation in northern Uganda represents thus an arena where displaced populations settled, implement diverse – and gendered- coping mechanisms to obtain their livelihoods, and become incorporated into the borderland community. We see how the conflict extends the need to provide solutions that must do more with developing northern Uganda, and hence ensuring the security situation does not hinder access to livelihoods and markets on either side of the border. The environment in Northern Uganda has also been tied up to the situation in South Sudan in order to create a dynamic akin to a war economy, which is dependent upon the continuing displacement of South Sudanese and the 'taming' of the refugee settlements. And as the displacement situation becomes integrated into the lifecycle of the borderland, it generates opportunities to better understand how South Sudanese help shape, engage with or

³⁸⁰TCRSS. 2011. Laws of South Sudan: The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan. Juba, South Sudan.

³⁸¹The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 was drafted by a Southern Sudan Constitutional Drafting Committee. It was published in April 2011. A version of the constitution was ratified on 7 July 2011 by the South Sudan Legislative Assembly.

³⁸²Craze, 2021. *Why is the return of displaced people such a thorny issue for South Sudan?*, in The New Humanitarian. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/1/5/why-return-displaced-people-thorny-issue-South-Sudan>

resist the State. It also provides a window from which recent attempts at boundary demarcation have contributed to changes in the character of the South Sudanese State in relation to its neighbours and its own population.

Ultimately, the control and directing of movement is superimposed on the commodification of land rights and territory, so that it adds value to that very territory and who comes to control it (Gertel et al,2014:10). As I learned from research participants, “people need to move”³⁸³, so that they can pay access back and forth during journeys, so that they buy and sell goods, offer and access services that help maintain the borderland economic structure and by default, attract external interest from both humanitarian and development interveners. This formulation follows a tradition of research on mobility, borders and State-making in the region, and today, it poses greater obstacle to resolving disruptions caused by violent conflicts, where elites build their businesses on the maintenance of displacement and of movement controls.

8.5. Main theoretical contributions

The theoretical contributions made in this study about the South Sudanese civil war (2013-2020) and the displacement situation, lie primarily in the recognition that displacement is part of the GoSS directing is version of State-making and development. This adds a new layer to research on theories of the State and emphasises the value of borderland and mobility studies. Broadly speaking, these are the conscious decision made in creating additional states during the civil war, first in 2015, and then again in 2017. Even within the lifecycle of the research project, the events that have characterised South Sudan’s displacement and State-making practices revealed that the State is not fixed and the institutions at its forefront can be dismantled at the same speed in which they have emerged.

Both the GoSS and the main opposition, SPLA-IO assume greater power in decision-making, although they have mostly antagonised civilians by playing the ethnic card. Evidences of a conscious strategy in “population engineering” amount since earlier investigations were conducted in 2016/17 and will remain relevant to analysis about the creation of internal boundaries for different groups in South Sudan. Findings such as these are important, because they help avoid reducing analysis to a simplified notion of ethnically based intolerance and rivalry to explain displacement.

³⁸³Comment from male participant on whether civilians would settle in either side of the border. Bidibidi settlement, 30/10/2019.

For many who analyse this situation, displacement is worth observing rather than explaining.³⁸⁴ In this regard, the identification of the practice of *multi-site living* explains, although with spatial and temporal limitations, why and how displaced South Sudanese are opting to set up their homes on the Ugandan side of the border, while maintaining social and economic links to South Sudan. This thesis attempted to move beyond addressing and suggesting what solutions can be offered to a situation described as a humanitarian crisis. It demonstrates the diverse paths taken and mechanisms adopted by a subset of displaced South Sudanese in Uganda, at a time when comprehensive norms and regulations of cross-border mobility follow conflict dynamics and become entangled with the everydayness of the Uganda-South Sudanese borderland. This is not about trying to understand why South Sudan has not emerged as success case of reconstruction or liberal democratisation, but to demonstrate what happens to people during long-term displacement that offers new analytical perspectives on why and how modern States may seek to direct population movement in a process to advance State goals.

8.6. Conclusion and future considerations

The present research was left hung on the expectation of field research continuation during 2020, which could have better determined a more straightforward pattern for the overall argument in this research pursuit. In the same month that field research was completed in Uganda, two major events in South Sudan were addressed. First, on February 15, 2020, President Salva Kiir decided to reinstate the former 10 states.³⁸⁵ Second, the R-ARCSS was finally agreed on February 22, 2020. These two events were at the epicentre of South Sudan's civil war at the start of the research project in 2018, and the long, arduous path towards resolving political settlements by accommodating opposition demands shows that Salva Kiir and his circle do not dictate the final words, and the structures created upon their ideals for a South Sudan can be dismantled and re-negotiated, though these often follow after very violent episodes.

That said, this thesis firmly argues that the South Sudanese mass displacement has been integrated to State-making practices designed by the GoSS. The case of South Sudan fits this

³⁸⁴Perhaps this comes more often from humanitarian observers and practitioners who have in mind the provision of aid delivery on a temporary basis. See Krause 2016.

³⁸⁵Titmamer, N. 2020. "*The return to Ten states in South Sudan: Does it restore peace?*", The Suud Institute. Accessed October 24, 2022 <https://www.suddinstitute.org/publications/show/5e4fc6fae031b> ; Awolich, A. 2020. *The boiling frustrations in South Sudan*. CSRF. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/repository/the-boiling-frustrations-in-south-sudan/>

endeavour as displacement is used as a tool for the realisation of State and non-state actors' goals. Where State-making is found to increase violence against civilians (ACLED, 2020) there are gaps in associating the South Sudanese policy environment with the practice of the military and opposition armed actors in relation to civilians. As the situation continues, debates around power-sharing, decentralisation, and even military cantonment allocation, dwarf solutions to address the displacement situation, in favour of appeasing political opponents through policy manoeuvres. In this respect, the research turned attention to the agency of displaced South Sudanese, to show how they adapt to opportunities and limitations displacement has brought, as they wait for a better outcome to the State they voted to build and be part of. Although the notion of a 'multi-site living' as a coping strategy is likely to suffer from insufficient data and unreliable accounts, is for these very same reasons that it also remains important. At present, we do not know what type of social contract there is or is likely to emerge between South Sudanese and the State. Variation has so far shown that research participants are forming a more critical view of the State they voted to create. The war to peace transition in South Sudan is not over, as the multi-faceted violence experienced by civilians persisted through 2021, having exceeded that of 2020 and 2019.³⁸⁶ In my final journal notes, written in the first days of February 2020 in Kampala, I observed with resignation that the forthcoming R-ARCSS would materialise, in that 'peace' would come to South Sudan to the point where the vast majority of displaced South Sudanese would return home.³⁸⁷ With the agreement signed, and the 32 states reverted back to 10, there are 4,036 million displaced South Sudanese (IDPs and refugees) as I wrote my final words in December 2022.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶African Centre for Strategic Studies, September 13, 2021. *10 Years after Independence South Sudan Faces Persistent Crisis*. Accessed November 2, 2022.

<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/10-years-after-independence-south-sudan-faces-persistent-crisis/>

³⁸⁷Craze, J. 2022 *Why return of displaced is such a thorny issue in South Sudan?*. The New Humanitarian. Accessed October 9, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/1/5/why-return-displaced-people-thorny-issue-South-Sudan>

³⁸⁸UNHCR 2022. *South Sudan situation*. Accessed October 9, 2022.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/southsudansituation#:~:text=90%2C000%20South%20Sudanese%20have%20fled,87%2C000%20returns%20have%20been%20recorded>

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

All recordings (without a * mark), fieldnotes and transcriptions are stored and in my possession.

1. Interview, South Sudanese money transfer businessman, Arua, 25/08/2019
2. Focus Group Discussion, South Sudanese Urban Refugees Association, Koboko, 26/08/2019
3. Interview, Oraba border immigration, Oraba, 26/08/2019
4. Interview, Oraba border police, Oraba 26/08/2019
5. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 29/08/2019
6. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 29/08/2019
7. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 29/08/2019
8. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 29/08/2019
9. Interview, SSURA (Male refugee) member, Arua, 30/08/2019
10. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 04/09/2019
11. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 05/09/2019
12. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 05/09/2019
13. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 05/09/2019
14. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 05/09/2019
15. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 06/09/2019
16. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 06/09/2019
17. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 06/09/2019
18. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 06/09/2019
19. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 07/09/2019
20. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 07/09/2019
21. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 07/09/2019
22. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 07/09/2019

23. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019
24. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019
25. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019
26. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Rhino settlement, 12/09/2019
27. Interview, Commercial Officer, Arua, 18/09/2019
28. Interview, Ugandan Ministry of Trade representative, 18/09/2019*
29. Interview, Ondramachako border immigration officer, 21/09/2019
30. Interview, Vurra border immigration officer, 21/09/2019*
31. Interview, Vurra border, URA officer, 21/09/2019*
32. Interview, Male driver, Juba Transporters association, 23/09/2019
33. Interview, Male driver, Juba Transporters association, 24/09/2019
34. Interview, Male driver, Juba Transporters association, 24/09/2019
35. Interview, Male driver, Juba Transporters association, 24/09/2019
36. Interview, OPM Arua *
37. Interview, Salya Musala triple border (Congolese) immigration, 25/09/2019
38. Interview, Salya Musala triple border (South Sudanese) immigration, 25/09/2019
39. Interview (repeated), Oraba security officer, Oraba, 25/09/2015
40. Interview, Ministry of Trade representatives, Kampala 10/10/2019
41. Interview, South Sudanese refugee, Kampala, 10/10/2019 *
42. Interview, Adjumani Commercial officer, Adjumani, 21/10/2019
43. Interview, Adjumani RDC security officer, Adjumani, 23/10/2019
44. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 26/10/2019
45. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 26/10/2019
46. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 26/10/2019
47. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 26/10/2019

48. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 26/10/2019
49. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 28/10/2019
50. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 28/10/2019
51. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 28/10/2019*
52. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 28/10/2019
53. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 28/10/2019
54. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 29/10/2019
55. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 29/10/2019
56. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 29/10/2019
57. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee Youth leader, BidiBidi settlement, 29/10/2019*
58. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 29/10/2019
59. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 30/10/2019
60. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 30/10/2019
61. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 30/10/2019
62. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, BidiBidi settlement, 30/10/2019
63. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019
64. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019
65. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019*
66. Focus Group Discussion, South Sudanese, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019
67. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019*
68. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019*
69. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019*
70. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Mungula settlement, 05/11/2019*
71. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019
72. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*

73. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*
74. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*
75. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019
76. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*
77. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*
78. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Pagrinya settlement, 06/11/2019*
79. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019
80. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
81. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
82. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019
83. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
84. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
85. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
86. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
87. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
88. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Aylo 1 settlement, 07/11/2019*
89. Interview, South Sudanese Male shop owner, Adjumani, 08/11/2019
90. Interview, South Sudanese Male shop owner, Adjumani, 08/11/2019*
91. Interview, South Sudanese Male shop owner, Adjumani, 08/11/2019
92. Interview, South Sudanese Male shop owner, Adjumani, 08/11/2019*
93. Interview, South Sudanese Male market stall owner, Adjumani, 08/11/2019
94. Interview, Ugandan commercial officer, Gulu, 11/11/2019
95. Interview, Ugandan chairperson chamber of commerce, Gulu, 12/11/2019*
96. Interview, Ugandan chairperson for business community, Arua, 20/11/2019*
97. Interview notes, COMESA officer at Goli/Mahagi border post, Goli 22/11/2019*

98. Meeting notes, Ariwara taxi stage driver, Arua, 26/11/2019*
99. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 03/12/2019
100. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 03/12/2019
101. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 03/12/2019
102. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 03/12/2019
103. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 04/12/2019*
104. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 04/12/2019*
105. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 04/12/2019*
106. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 04/12/2019*
107. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 04/12/2019*
108. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 05/12/2019*
109. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 05/12/2019*
110. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 05/12/2019*
111. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 05/12/2019*
112. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 07/12/2019*
113. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 07/12/2019*
114. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 07/12/2019*
115. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Bidibidi settlement, 07/12/2019*
116. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Adjumani, 11/12/2019*
117. Interview, settlement's assistant (Male refugee), Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
118. Interview, South Sudanese Male refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
119. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
120. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
121. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
122. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*

123. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
124. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
125. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
126. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 11/12/2019*
127. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
129. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
130. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
132. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
133. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
134. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
135. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
136. Interview, South Sudanese Female refugee, Boroli settlement, 13/12/2019*
137. Personal communication, Male South Sudanese, Arua, 04/01/2020

Appendix A: As referred to Chapter 4.5, pp 94.

Copy of the document given to me by Edward in Bidibidi settlement.

On 22nd/August/2018, the prominent member of Jieng council of elders and the master planer of 15th /December/ 2015 incident Hon. Telar Ring has meet together with the President of the republic H.E. Salva Kiir and Jieng council of elders leadership including the Director general of National security Gen. Akol Koor Kuac. The meeting last for six hours. It started at 10:00 p.m and end at 4: p.m early morning, in the house of the President in Juba.

According to the closed source, the meeting agenda was all about the plans ahead of revitalization agreement and preparation for welcoming of those oppositions leaders to juba and the policy that will let them have trust and come to Juba all.

Secondly the recruitment of unknown gunmen groups and there logistics including coordination device that will give them access to coordinate with National Security service and other organize forces.

President H.E. Salva Kiir statement

First of all I would like to welcome our brother Ambassador Telar Ring and all the members of Jieng council. I'm very glad if we the Dinka community are in unity despite our personal grievance we have put Jieng community above all our interests and everything. We hope our brother Gen. Paul Malong will join us soon, as there is a sign of good respond from his side, since I have establish contact and negotiation with him through the minister of foreign affairs hon. Nial Deng Nial. For your information we need to open our eyes very well the time has come for us to prepare ourselves to deal with the enemies who are blocking our progress as Jieng community.

The Equatorian people now have stand-up and join Nuer in other to flash us out of power and now they have become our big enemy that if we have not open our eyes they will overrun this government and will chase us out. The Equatorian leaders and the other non Nuer and dinka tribes are working together now a days to unite and fight us. Gen. Thomas Cirilo is not alone, there are leadership of equatoria in side juba here who are with him.

Our first plan of controlling some land in Equatoria and other places in western Bahr el Ghazal for success, 80% of juba is now under our control including Yei River state, Wau, Yambio, and Nimule. I have talked to president H.E. Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, to help us take control of Kajoke Morobo, Laiaya, he said no problem, soon he will plan for chaos in side Arua, Koboko and and Moy the west Nile region then together we will flash those Equatorians in Kajokeji, Morobo, Laiya. We agreed that he will take some part and we as Jieng will take some part. He has promise me that I will not support any rebel group operating in equatoria, secondly let us sign the revitalization agreement and allow all those oppositions to come in this time we are going to coordinate together of how to deal with them all once and for all. And in juba it is the time I want our forces to kill those Equatorians in big numbers and even rape their women both young and old once then will chase them out of juba once and take control of juba.

Before implementation of the revitalization peace, we need to recruit all the matiang anyor militias we have plus new once, all of them must be armed and send home around juba to be civilian until time for operation come. Only few SPLA forces we will live in case they want guarar we will disarm them and withdraw them out of juba. Secondly president museveni has already deployed for us around juba 3,000 PDF inform of traders, they are now working around juba and Yei he deployed around 2,000. It is time to deal with all these Equatorian and non-dinka leaders who are in the army and other organize forces including politician.

This a few briefing I want to give you, now I have open chance for commend, question and advice

Hon. Bona Malual statement

I greet you all in the name of jieng. I am very bliss and congratulating my brother ambassador Telar ring for the wise decision he has taken by return back home and join us people in struggle. My brother there is no way we can protect ourselves as dinka (jieng) community unless we must to come together. Secondly I would like to thank the president our son for his effort to unite the jieng community. He and our brother hon. Nial deng nial have play a very big role to bring us together despite our personal disagreement and misunderstanding. This is the spirit that we want to exist generation to generation to come.

We as dinka are the owners of this land, all these migrants from Equatoria and other non-dinka (jieng) who are claiming that they have right in this land of South Sudan are dogs and pigs, and we will deal with them in all ways and by all means. Base on history all of them come from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda and we will send them back to their places.

I was with President H.E. Omar Hassen Al-Bahir two days back, discussing about the revitalization peace process and our join tactics towards getting upper hand in the process. President H>E. Omar Al-Bahir told me, Sudan will never and ever stand with Nuer or Shuluk, and the only thing he want from us as jieng is to recognize the disputed places like Abeyei, Kafia Kengi, Mile fifteen as Sudanese territory and concerning the Nuer and the Shuluk we have to work together and divided the land in which they will give us half of the oil area and they will take half, and we will take Malakal then they will take Rabkona, renk and those places in the border. In which we have agree upon that. So it is the time for us to work with our friends in the region particularly Uganda and Sudan in order for us to accomplish our mission. President H.E. Salva Kiir, Hon. Nial Deng Nial and Gen. Akol Koor Kuac will continue work strategic plan with Uganda concerning our land in Equatoria and as we the other group will continue coordinate with Sudan.

Concerning our brother paul malong, we need to accelerate the process by bring him in, so am asking Hon. Nial Deng Nial and ambassador Telar ring to continue their dialogue with him.

Ambassador Telar Ring statement

I would like to thank my brother President H.E. Salva Kiir and all of you here members of jieng council, it has been awhile since I have decided to leave juba and join our brother Gen. Paul Malong, sincerely speaking I have been not happy with the way you president and other jieng council members have treated Gen. Paul Malong, and I have been in contact with you president from Russia. What let me very annoyed is the way you have treated our brother. But is okay, I would like to asked forgiveness from all of you here and I forgive all of you.

Concerning the issue of jieng community, it is really the time now, for us to accomplish our mission that we have set before. And I'm very concerning of it now. Equatorians now have got few weapons and other non-dinka and nuer tribes whom to me I use to consider them all Equatorians because they are similar to each other even their cultures. To me Telar Ring there is no way for waiting the revitalization peace agreement to be sign then we will come and start the operation, it has to stert now. The unknown gunmen unit has to be given enough logistic and resources to start their operation now. From door to door of every non-dinka tribes. What is need for revitalization peace is for Gen. Akol Koor and the other senior military commanders to sit down and work out the plan of assassination and execution of all this oppositions leaders particularly the group of G10 and Dr. Riek Machar. The political and diplomatic community has to start come up with their plans now so that we will see and start to work out the implementation. We are not going to waste time for

nothing. Concerning our brother Gen. Paul Malong, mv and Hon. Nial Deng Nial will do our best and bring him in before time.

Our big enemies among Equatorians leaders who will be a threat to us, are Clement Wani Kongs and Obute Manur, this two if we deal with them no one will exist in Equatoria land the rest we will slaughter them like chickens. We need to plan well for them without wasting time. Thomas Cirilo will be assassinate between Uganda, Sudan or Egypt.

We need to disarmed all the non-dinka soldiers who are in the organize forces (national security, police, army and etc). Secondly restriction of giving them even departure order to travel out of South Sudan. Thirdly raise the price of tickets to Khartoum and other countries in the region. fourthly, restrict the exchange of hard currency in the central bank and other commercial banks. They have to be without access to anything so that they will remain in juba other places where they are in.

Lastly, there must be immediate deployment of SPLA forces and national security in all this strategic areas in Equatoria I will end here and said thank you.

Conclusion by president

Thank you all my brothers and sisters who are here, once again am very happy to see our brother ambassador telar ring today with us here. Today is a blessed day to all of us as jleng (dinka) and it is going to be a historical day in our life and those members who are not with us now. Without wasting time, we need to start put all this plans in order and from two committees as we agreed upon. Committee for political and diplomatic lobby and committee for security and operation. As my brothers here have said, the time is now we can't wait.

Our secretary of information will communicate to us about next meeting in which the two committee will come and presence there reports and work plans, then from there we will continue. Once again I would like to thanks all of you let us keep the spirit.

Conclusion

Top secret and confidential

