Chapter Title

Understanding the Everyday Movements of South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda.

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the ongoing, contemporary, everyday movements of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Despite the repatriation of vast numbers of refugees globally, little is known about how, when or why refugees might move again, nor the diversity of their later movements. Based in fourteen months ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in northern Uganda's Palabek Refugee Settlement during 2017 and 2018, this chapter not only discusses the precise dimensions of refugees' journeys, but also the reasons behind when and why South Sudanese refugees in Uganda travel to the places they go in the ways that they do. While some movements might involve crossing the international border back to South Sudan, many do not. Recognition of this inherent complexity is crucial. Although many refugees engaged in multiple interconnected journeys both within Uganda and across the border, the timing, success, and duration of such were often unpredictable. This chapter therefore argues that wider personal and historical perspectives are needed to capture and understand the full range movements undertaken. In making this argument, this chapter simultaneously demonstrates the

general inadequacies of standard yet widely held discourses about the processes of return and repatriation.

Keywords

Displacement, Mobility, Refugees, Repatriation, Return Migration, South Sudan, Uganda

Introduction

This chapter describes some of the many, everyday journeys undertaken by ordinary South Sudanese refugees displaced to Uganda and resettled within Palabek Refugee Settlement (PRS) in northern Uganda's Lamwo District between 2017 and 2018. In doing so, this chapter will highlight the myriad movements undertaken by displaced people during and after conflict, as well as the many, complex reasons why and how they move. Based on fourteen months ethnographic fieldwork within Palabek Refugee Settlement, as well as a longer personal history of research among South Sudanese in New Zealand (O'Byrne 2014b, 2014c, 2021a) as well as South Sudan (O'Byrne 2014a, 2017, 2021b; Storer et al., 2017), this chapter uses the ongoing movements of people displaced by violent conflict to take a longer and more wide-ranging view on the contemporary journeys of refugees. It will argue that the full range and complexity of these movements can only be fully conceptualised and understood when positioned within wider personal and historical perspectives and experiences (such as displacements caused by the violence of the Sudanese War (1955-72), the Second Sudanese War (1983-2005), and especially the recently concluded (yet still fragile) South Sudanese Civil War (2013-18)). In making this argument, the various ongoing, everyday movements of South Sudanese refugees which this chapter discusses also further demonstrates the general inadequacies underlying standard and rather simplistic yet widely held discourses about the processes of return and repatriation (cf. Hovil 2010; Kaiser 2010; Long 2010; Warner 1994).

The ability to continue to move after or perhaps despite displacement is an essential survival strategy for many refugees (Monsutti 2008; Long 2010). This is especially true for those living close to neighbouring countries or in fragile climate-effected or conflict-ridden environments (Lubkemann 2016; Schapendonk & Steel 2014; Vancluysen 2022). Such continued post-displacement movements have been recognised as a substantial component of South Sudanese livelihood strategies for several decades (Allen 1996; Hovil 2010; Kaiser 2010) and was perhaps most apparent following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended the Second Sudanese War in January 2005. Not all of these movements were a form of repatriation or other return migration, however, and even for those who did repatriate, the very fact of their repatriation following the CPA by no means stopped

them from moving elsewhere in South Sudan or back and forth across international borders the region. The onwards movements that took place following post-CPA repatriation were especially common for the purposes of trade, employment, or education, both echoing historical journeys undertaken by South Sudanese in the past as well as prefiguring movements such as those I discovered in PRS during 2017 and 2018.

Almost all the adult refugees I spoke with over the course of my 2017-18 fieldwork had already been refugees at least one previous time in their lives, often being displaced on three or (in one case) even four occasions. And despite these previous experiences, as well as the quite abhorrent violence of South Sudan's most recent conflict, a sizeable proportion of these people continued to move not only throughout Uganda (their country of displacement) but also back and forth across the international border, just as they had done for the majority of their lives. In this way, just like the Afghani refugees with whom Monsutti (2008) worked, for many South Sudanese residents of PRS, 'the leaving and coming back … [was] constant' (Monsutti 2008: 59). Indeed, similarly to the participants in Monsutti's Afghani fieldwork, most of the South Sudanese that I spoke with during my research moved in very much the same and for the same reasons during times of war as they did in periods of peace. Despite war and peace, people from this region have therefore always moved. However, although the overall experience of personal, familial, or communal movement has always been rather commonplace, the specific reasons behind the actual practice of those movements are much more multifaceted, often determined by a diverse array of local, regional, and international contexts (cf. Kaiser 2010: 54-55). And more often than not, the dynamics of these movements reproduces the specific circumstances and trajectories of individuals' own prior journeys (cf. Hovil 2010: 12-14; IRRI 2018b: 4) but also demonstrably 'continu[es] … the mobility practices of earlier generations' (Bjarnesen 2016: 61; cf. Vancluysen 2022).

Despite the complex and multifaceted nature of the journeys that people in this region have always undertaken, however, most movements among displaced South Sudanese are seemingly assumed to be primarily livelihoods oriented. This does not mean livelihoods are not important, because they clearly are, but simply to acknowledge that other aspects of individual and familial continuity such as healthcare, schooling, spouses, and so on are just as significant as jobs or money. Thus, although it would be disingenuous to suggest that livelihood or economic concerns are not important reasons behind some of these movements – many *are* doubtlessly economic-based or livelihoods-focused, after all – I would suggest that analyses which are solely (or perhaps even primarily) focused upon livelihoods or economic concerns cannot adequately account for the full range and reasons why people move, here or anywhere, displaced or not (cf. Monsutti 2008: 58-59). In other words, the extensive range of sociocultural and relational connections maintained and encompassed by peoples'

mobility practices is wider than those generally recognised in most common humanitarian-based understandings of 'livelihoods'.

The issue is then, as Allen (1996: 7) has forcefully cautioned, that if analyses of migration and displacement does not account for the full array and complexity of the types, forms, and functions of journeys which people undertake, then such representations necessarily 'give a false … impression that one is dealing with a simple and well circumscribed event rather than with an untidy process, involving multiple, and sometimes overlapping migrations in both directions'. It is therefore vital to give wider recognition to the full range and complexity refugees' movements, not only regarding the practical needs of ensuring that the local, national, and international refugee response is appropriate to the task at hand, but also for the wider ethical concerns involved. Indeed, at this point it should now be expected that refugees not only engage in continued, onwards movements during their period of displacement but, moreover, that the ongoing practice of such types of further mobility will endure to take place long after their displacement ends (Long 2010: 36; cf. Monsutti 2008: 59). After all, as Ramadan (2013: 70) has argued, 'in the absence of a durable solution to refugee status, migration and transnational networks may represent an "enduring" and effective livelihood strategy'.

Background

Refugees from Uganda and Sudan/South Sudan have been hosted in the other country since the 1950s (Allen 1996: 226-228). Most displaced South Sudanese during this research resulted from the violence of the 2013-18 South Sudanese Civil War, a conflict which killed hundreds of thousands (Checci et al., 2018) and displaced nearly four million more (OCHA 2016: 2), 860,000 of whom were at that time hosted in Uganda (UNHCR 2019a, 2019b). Uganda has been widely praised for its refugee policies, under which refugees are entitled to the same basic services as citizens, as well as some freedom of movement and rights to employment and business ownership. Such rights are often practically unavailable, however (IRRI 2018a: 4, 2018b: 7; Kaiser 2006: 601, 620; UNHCR 2019a: 6).

This chapter focuses exclusively on the residents of Palabek Refugee Settlement (PRS), in the country's northern Lamwo District. This settlement opened on 12 April 2017 following a sudden influx of South Sudanese refugees following an outbreak of fighting east of the Nile in late 2016 and early 2017 (UNHCR 2017: 1). At the time of fieldwork, the population of PRS grew from 34,000 at the end of 2018 to over 52,000 by the end of the following year (UNHCR 2019b), and although there were more than twenty different South Sudanese ethnic groups present in the settlement, the vast majority were primarily Acholi- and Lotuko-speaking areas (UNHCR 2018).

[INSERT FIGURE ONE HERE]

The findings presented here are based on twelve months ethnographic fieldwork undertaken over 2017 and 2018. My interpretation of the anthropological method follows the intersubjective phenomenology articulated by Michael Jackson (1996: 9), who argues that 'direct dialogue with others, afford[s] opportunities to explore knowledge … as an intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground' (Jackson 1996: 9). A fundamental component of such a methodology is an understanding that 'we build our ethnography by way of the relationships that we establish in the process' (Finnström 2015: S224). As I have been working with Acholi speaking South Sudanese for over a decade, the findings I present are the result of deep interpersonal relationships built and maintained over a considerable period. As well as this intersubjective ethnography, participant observation was undertaken during food aid delivery across multiple Food Distribution Cycles (FDCs), a wide range of stakeholder meetings, the Refugee Welfare Council (RWC) elections in July and August 2018, and a number of community events or gatherings. Numerous formal, semi-formal, and informal interviews were also conducted, with NGO, OPM, and UNHCR employees as well as members of the refugee and Ugandan communities. Further, 50 open-ended questionnaires about individual mobility were undertaken.

Cross-border movement among South Sudanese refugees in Palabek

It was apparent that cross border movements between Uganda and South Sudan continued throughout the recent conflict, despite large areas of South Sudan being unsafe. This research suggests that it was actually the regional variation in South Sudan's wider conflict dynamics and the specific location and demographic composition of PRS which were the primary factors involved in the cross-border movements of many PRS-based refugees: not only did most PRS residents originate from the borderlands regions east of the Equatorian Nile but, as the border itself was only around 50km north of PRS, the very fact that 'home' remained both nearby and reasonably secure allowed many of the settlement's residents to cross back and forth in relative safety.

As mentioned earlier, most residents of PRS during 2017-18 were from Acholi- and Lotuko-speaking areas of South Sudan (UNHCR 2018), communities that originated from areas of Eastern Equatoria relatively nearby or even adjacent to the Ugandan border. The proximity of PRS to the area of origin was therefore a key factor in the cross-border movements of many refugees, especially those from Magwi, Obbo, Pagee, Pajok, Palotaka and other Acholi-speaking border communities. Although uncommon, it remained possible that refugees originating from these places could literally 'walk back home', much as they had walked into displacement. Unlike the Acholi, however, the Langi and Lotuko who composed the other main ethnic groups in PRS came from a much larger, famine and drought

stuck but relatively more conflict-safe area further east in Eastern Equatoria, beginning in the eastern foothills of the Imatong ranges and extending as far as the Ethiopian and Kenyan borders. These refugees often had to pay significant amounts to local Lotuko vehicle owners for safe transport to the Ugandan border from their areas of origin in the further reaches of Eastern Equatoria and, due to the general lack of money or income generating activities within PRS over my fieldwork, generally could not afford to engage in temporary or irregular returns to their former communities.

[INSERT FIGURE TWO HERE]

Thus, opportunities afforded by this combination of proximity and (relative) peace meant that, even if not entirely predictable or everyday, cross-border mobility among some (generally Acholi) refugees in PRS definitely took place with great regularity throughout my fieldwork. Furthermore, following the largely positive developments in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) peace initiative over the second half of 2018, such movements actually became increasingly common as my fieldwork progressed, with many refugees who had said – in 2017 or early 2018 – that they would not return to South Sudan in the near future actually taking part in one or more cross-border journeys by the time the year had ended (cf. Schots & Smith 2019; Vancluysen 2022).

When asked about the rationale which prompted them to return across the border, South Sudanese in PRS produced a range of personal, familial, sociocultural, political, and economic reasons. In this way the underlying drivers for their movement were diverse and multifaceted, eliding easy categorisation, much as they were for Afghani refugees displaced across central Asia in Monsutti's seminal research (2008: 59). Indeed, often there were multiple divergent reasons driving any one specific journey while, on the other hand, seemingly distinct and unrelated movements were shown to be interlinked when subjected to deeper analysis. The most common reasons that Palabek residents gave for their cross-border movements were to visit friends and family, to collect objects left behind, to engage in trade or other business, to access gardens and engage in horticulture, to gather information about possible future repatriation, and to attend a funeral or accompany a body returning for burial (cf. Hovil: 2010: 6; Kaiser 2010: 52; REACH 2018a: 4).

Here I wish to highlight just two noteworthy examples for how personal, historical, cultural and regional factors intersect to drive mobility among local populations, whether displaced or not. Firstly, there is the rise in people moving across the border to engage in horticultural practices in June and July, a movement which coincides with the annual 'short dry' period when people from most rural communities across the region generally begin preparing for the year's second agricultural season. This second growing season is absolutely vital in maintaining household food security in communities

across the borderlands, as the November and December harvests for the crops sown during this period occur just before the three-to-four-month dry period between December and March. No matter where they live or whether or not they are eligible for refugee status, then, it is no overstatement to suggest that large sections of the regional populace depend on crops planted in June and July for their food security later in the year. Therefore, the movement of a number refugees back to familial gardens in South Sudan echo and reproduce the same seasonally-based, agriculturally-defined movements that had distinguished their pre-refugee lives (cf. REACH 2018a: 4-5), during which time entire families would move for a period of several weeks to small temporary shelter in their bush gardens to best maximise the productivity of their second growing season – and thus try to best enable their continued survival.

Similarly noteworthy is that some of the most significant movements in a refugee's life are not at first necessarily obvious, nor perhaps even expected: for example, those relating to life's end. Along with gardening, which was definitely more temporally defined in its practice, death-related mobility was probably the single most common reason I was given as to why someone might 'go back home', especially before the settling of the R-ARCSS peace accord in September 2018. Indeed, death-related mobility was such a common driver among PRS returnees that I feel compelled to suggest that 'returning' a body to its native soil, to be buried where it 'belongs', must be among the important yet underappreciated facets of refugees' mobility, at least in this region. Even leaving aside the widespread cultural idea of a person's spirit continuing to exist after their physical death (cf. O'Byrne 2017), a further element which could be considered when analysing the ways and reasons for the movement of a person across the course of the life (and afterlife), such death-related movements importantly demonstrate the myriad of ways in which refugees continue to engage in active, agency-fuelled place-making practices: by acting where possible to return their deceased, they take advantage of the opportunities and paradoxes within local governance regimes to temporarily visit areas of origin and belonging. In this way, continuity of life, meaning, and connection are maintained, despite other uncertainties. Moreover, such death-related movements also generally incorporated many of the other sociocultural and relational concerns underlying people's movement. Thereby, someone who might travel back to South Sudan to accompany a body for burial would also meet friends and family, collect a few items left behind when they fled, and engage in some small-scale before returning back across the border to the refugee settlement in Uganda.

As well as the sociocultural and relational concerns just discussed, there were also obvious class dimensions to the ways in which refugees in Palabek crossed the border. Especially for members of the Acholi ethnicity who originated from areas immediately beside the border, cross-border movement was most common among people located at both extremes of the class spectrum and

demonstrated a distinctive class profile: on the one hand, while some with dependable access to vehicular transport and a reliable supply of desirable trade goods are involved in international business, most migrants crossed the border out of sheer desperation, induced by uncertainties around the inadequate service provision within the settlement. Such patterns were particularly noticeable during a period from late 2017 to mid-2018, when the settlement was noticeably struck by was a definite food shortage but before the R-ARCSS initiative brought a more widespread and generalised ability to return in September 2018.

What these class-based patterns largely meant was that those refugees with the means and resources to engage in international trade – either through their own personal wealth or via their ability to mobilise resources from among friends and family who had gained third country resettlement during one of the country's previous conflicts – could exploit the opportunities which conflict and resettlement invariably present to the lucky few and then use these for their own personal and familial advantage. Such returnees demonstrate that, no matter one's refugee status, mobility is not only possible but can even be leveraged for its inherent benefits. For those with the means to engage in such trade, mobility and wealth were therefore mutually reinforcing. However, the number of people actually able to engage in repeated, profitable border movements were very few, and, as they could also mobilise resources not readily available to many refugees, one should be wary in over generalising from their experiences.

The movements of those at the other end of the class spectrum to these international businesspeople seemed more common, however. They were certainly more openly discussed. This was especially true for that period between late 2017 and mid-2018 that I mentioned earlier, during which time the settlement's food rations seemingly rarely provided in an adequate, reliable, or timely fashion, a crucial oversight on the part of the settlement's governance and humanitarian actors given that the vast majority of residents depended upon their designated food aid simply to survive. Given the basic parameters of the refugee protection mandate, timely, problem-free food distribution seems like it should be among any refugee operation's most fundamental activities. In PRS over 2017 and early 2018, however, this was simply not the case and lack of food was consistently cited as the single greatest concern of most residents, with missing or delayed food aid being one of the defining features of settlement life and – I was repeatedly told – the primary reason people returned to South Sudan.

[INSERT FIGURE THREE HERE]

Indeed, it seemed that the majority of people who moved during the February to April part of this period – one coinciding not only with the height of the dry season's annual food scarcity but also with the worst few months of shortages induced by irregular or missing food aid – also seemed among the

most peripheral of the refugee community. For many of the most marginalised individuals, life in PRS was simply too fragile to be bearable: despite their *prima facie* status, they had either failed to officially register with the OPM or could not afford the bribe money necessary to do so (cf. Ogeno & O'Byrne 2018) and, unable to afford life in the settlement without food, health services, or other humanitarian assistance, were driven by sheer desperation back to the uncertainty of life in South Sudan. Rather than beneficial or even glorious, as it often was for those with the resources to engage in gardening or trade, the mobility of the marginal was dangerous, always holding the potential for serious setback or even death.

Complicating stories about movement among South Sudanese refugees in Uganda

Not all the journeys upon which refugees embark involve crossing a border, however, and the majority of those undertaken by PRS residents during the course of my 2017-18 fieldwork actually meant travelling to somewhere else within Uganda. Although this might sometimes be simply for the day, such as when someone travels to a nearby town to buy or sell goods, because refugees in Uganda are legally entitled to freedom of movement it could be for a stay of one or more nights, such as when someone is hospitalised or travels to visit family in a different area. Indeed, on any given day there will be a number of people transiting backwards and forwards for health or business reasons between the main northern towns of Kitgum or Gulu and their homes in Palabek. In fact, internal journeys of multiple days' duration can even last for more extended periods: for example, many teenagers take part in secondary education in one of a number of boarding schools in northern or central Uganda, just as they had done before they had been forced to flee South Sudan, and the seasonal rhythms in the patterns of these children's movements is that of the Ugandan education system rather than the annual agricultural cycle.

As noted earlier, many residents of PRS had previously been made refugees during the First or Second Sudanese Wars. Due to these experiences, most Acholi-speaking adults in PRS have previously lived in at least one Ugandan refugee settlement and, despite their previous repatriations following the cessation of those conflicts, a number actually continued to maintain houses, farms, families, or businesses in or nearby the settlements in which they had once lived. This is particularly true for the area around Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement in Bweyale District, central Uganda, home to significant numbers of Acholi South Sudanese during the 1990s and 2000s (Kaiser 2006, 2010). Although most Kiryandongo residents repatriated between 2005 and 2011 following the signing of the CPA and the end of the Second Sudanese War, some remained while others self-settled in the area around nearby

Bweyale town. Visits to friends and family remaining in that region thereby make up a sizeable portion of the Ugandan-based movements of PRS's Acholi-speaking refugees (cf. REACH 2018a: 5).

[INSERT FIGURE FOUR HERE]

Refugees do not solely move due to the needs of their present lives, however: obviously, when considering the possibility of moving, the people involved will generally think about their needs, fears, and hopes for the future (cf. Hovil 2010; Kaiser 2010). Such considerations understandably take place whether the intended journey is the simple matter of a motorcycle trip to the nearest village to visit a market as much as if the journey is one involving travel across the country to visit friends and family or across the international border to their country of origin. Indeed, many South Sudanese continue to move to and from various Ugandan locations for a variety of often mundane reasons during the course of their everyday lives, and the same is true of those who remain in South Sudan, just as it is for the Ugandans who the refugees live amongst. Moreover, many residents of PRS have left the settlement to visit compatriots in various parts of Uganda during their current displacement, sometimes on multiple occasions. Once again, most of these cases mirror the personal, familial, and communal experiences of movement which many South Sudanese have undertaken in the recent past and present.

By the end of my fieldwork in November 2018, for assorted reasons – including safety and security as well as the need to harvest crops from the second growing season and the promise of better road conditions during the start of the approaching dry season – both internal and international mobility among PRS residents seemed to occur at the highest rate of all my fieldwork. Even at this point, however, individual and communal analyses about personal security and the stability of peace were generally still the most important factors considered when planning a potential future return to South Sudan. Concerns about personal safety and the wider security situation were obviously always given extra significance when considering such journeys, of course, as it was largely due to violence that most of PRS's residents had become refugees. Therefore, I was told by nearly everyone I spoke with that their – and indeed most residents' – plans for repatriation or other long-term return to South Sudan in the future depended entirely upon the continuing success of the R-ARCSS peace initiative.

Although several previous attempts had been made to end the South Sudanese Civil War, there was something intangible about the structure or timing of the R-ARCSS which led many PRS residents to consider that this ceasefire might actually work. From what I can gather, the first reports back about the nature and quality of the R-ARCSS from friends or family on the ground generally only seemed to confirm this, and it is undeniable that, after the R-ARCSS was eventually signed in September 2018, refugees from PRS almost immediately began returning across the border in greater numbers. In fact,

although the following fell outside my official fieldwork time in Palabek, friends and informants in the settlement later informed me that a number of people had remained in South Sudan for quite lengthy periods of time over the November 2018 – March 2019 dry season. According to my contacts on the ground in PRS, some of these visits may even have adopted a more semi-permanent form, with those crossing the border at this time often undertaking substantial work to prepare their homes for the possibility of their eventual future repatriation, such as clearing weeds and other regrowth from household gardens and compounds. Nonetheless, even those who seemed to be most proactive about undertaking longer or multiple cross-border journeys generally still remained cautious about the future: as everyone recognised, the peace process would remain fragile for a considerable time. And, as almost all my interlocutors acknowledged, all previous ceasefires had failed. Consequently, most people took a pragmatic approach to R-ARCSS's fragility and whether or not they would repatriate.

Discussion

In this chapter I have described merely some of the myriad movements undertaken by South Sudanese refugees in Uganda during 2017 and 2018, predominantly through the lens of Acholi-speaking refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement in the country's northern Lamwo District. Despite what might be initially assumed, cross-border movements between Uganda and South Sudan continued throughout the South Sudanese Civil War, notwithstanding the fact that large sections of South Sudan remained incredibly unsafe during this period. In highlighting these activities, I hope to have demonstrated that how, when, and why refugees' move actually have significant real-world consequences for the individuals and households involved, as well as for important implications for the theoretical conceptualisation of displacement-based mobility practices.

Most South Sudanese refugees in PRS I spoke with during this research moved because of a combination of factors. Poverty, insecurity, and the general fragility and uncertainty of everyday life were among the most common of a range of intersecting rationales. There was thus a great deal of complexity behind how, when, and why any single refugee individual might move. Indeed, not only are there frequently multiple factors at play, but more often than not these will change over time and through individual memory and reflection. For the movements discussed here, the most significant rationale behind any journey included (but were certainly not limited to) regional variation in conflict-related violence, the precise locations being left and returned to, annual and seasonal variation of a natural or anthropogenic kind, and refugee community demographics (especially age, gender and class). Moreover, everyday economic activities in the settlement were typified by such an obvious lack of money or dependable cash flow that many people went to great lengths to try to access even the

most unreliable of money-making opportunities. Thus, as noted earlier, unless it were for the purposes of a death-related journey, most movements among residents of PRS usually seemed to travel elsewhere in Uganda for a period of only a few days – generally to visit friends and family or engage in healthcare or trade – or returned to their areas of origin in rural southern South Sudan to engage in activities like horticulture.

[INSERT FIGURE FIVE HERE]

Although the great majority of movements undertaken were irregular, once-off visits to one place or another, some definitely had more 'rhythmic' dimensions, and some of the former even became the latter over time and through repetition. Nevertheless, alongside their expected differences around the frequency and length of movements undertaken, seemingly divergent forms of mobility actually shared many similarities, including a variety of geographical (location returned to), temporal (duration of the visit), and seasonal (time of year) dimensions. Return was therefore easier than for refugees who originated further from Uganda or who would have to travel through conflict-affected regions to get back to their places of origin. Similar mobility patterns have been noted among refugees from the Equatorian regions displaced to Uganda's north-west settlements (REACH 2018a: 5). Indeed, as Grabska (2014) and Kaiser (2010) have similarly noted among earlier populations of mobile South Sudanese, variations in who chooses to move, to where, how often, and for how long can be useful indicators of social differentiation.

I end with the following conclusions, recommendations, and caveats: First is the rather obvious point that the unique position of PRS in relation to both the international border as well as to relatively safe areas in the country of origin are necessarily important considerations. It might therefore be difficult to extrapolate from the specific circumstances of PRS residents to make more wide-ranging statements about refugees in general, whether those in other Ugandan settlements or among the hundreds of millions of displaced people forced to live elsewhere in the world. After all, most PRS residents originate in areas directly north of Lamwo District and crossing the border was a relatively common occurrence in the lives of many PRS residents before their most recent refugee experience. Further, the ethnic Acholi residents of PRS share a language with their Ugandan hosts and can therefore pass themselves off as a Ugandan national relatively easily if stop by Ugandan police or military forces. Moreover, as well as these returns being relatively quick, easy, and cheap, the 'home' areas being returned to are at least relatively free of localised violence. This makes them safe to visit, if not entirely safe for extended durations. I would therefore suggest a certain caution either before considering the cross-border movements of Palabek's Acholi refugees a form of repatriation or before generalising to broadly about their activities.

Moreover, the ways in which residents of PRS speak about and practice returns to and from South Sudan are often framed through the positive and negative experiences of uncertainty and unpredictability within life in exile. As Grabska (2014: 6) has noted, 'the visions for the future and the imagined homes that women and men long for are shaped according to their experiences in the specific framework of refugee camps'. Thus, despite what has just been mentioned about the somewhat unique proximity to point of origin and return of PRS in the Ugandan refugee context, in actuality, many of those who did return across the border on some form of more permanent basis did not do so because they wanted to 'return home' at that precise moment but instead did so because of the problems they faced living within resettlement. This was especially the case for those more marginal refugees who were refused food or other humanitarian aid.

Finally, transformations in how, when, and why displaced people move are instructional: along with the existential difficulties of settlement life, perhaps the most important parameters affecting South Sudanese refugees' cross-border mobilities were a reduction in localised violence at the destination and the uncertain institution of a perhaps temporary peace. The likelihood of any large-scale, future repatriation therefore depends upon the stability and success of this peace, with a return to either widespread or extreme violence limiting future returns. This demonstrates the continuing importance of the international community in South Sudan's peacebuilding efforts, not only in the provision of security, justice, and the rule of law but also in the development of rural infrastructure in neglected or war-affected areas. After all, without significant, localised rural investment, repatriation may ultimately prove unsustainable.

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