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Conflict legacies

Understanding youth's post-peace agreement practices in Yumbe, north-western Uganda

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7. 'RUNNING TO JUBA': YOUNG PEOPLE NAVIGATING DECISIVE MOMENTS AND PERILOUS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

[South] Sudan is a very bad place […]. They steal people's money […]. They rape and can even kill. They can put you at gunpoint; and even the neighbours might see it, but they can't do anything. Such a thing happened to me. (Field notes after an informal encounter with Abori, 11 August 2012)

At a certain point, the way they tortured people …. It was too much; that is why I decided to leave. If you don't leave by that time … in a day you may get Ugandans … sometimes they can die by 20 … 30 in a day!' (Interview with Aluma, 6 October 2013)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter captures the frequent temporary migrations of young men and women from Yumbe to the ROSS[302] in the period from 2011 until 2013. The name of Juba, the capital and largest city of the ROSS, was heard literally everywhere in Yumbe District on the fringes of north-western Uganda during this period.[303] Already, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 between the two parts of Sudan, south Sudan slowly began to attract businessmen and women from all over Uganda and Kenya, who often took risks to tap into the virgin markets of south Sudan where almost all goods were scarce. South Sudan, and particularly its capital city Juba, started attracting many young men in sectors such as construction and informal trade, in particular also from the West Nile region in north-western Uganda, where unemployment at the time was extremely high. Women were reportedly active in Juba in managing small roadside 'restaurants' (popularly referred to as 'hotels'), in petty trade, as cleaners, and in prostitution. This movement increased especially after south Sudan became independent on 9 July 2011.

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[302] Throughout this chapter, my interlocutors use the term 'south Sudan' to refer to the Republic of South Sudan (ROSS). Wherever I cite them, I have left this unchanged.

[303] There is much attention paid to the idea that the notion of border areas as 'fringes' does not represent the realities in such spaces. This is especially so because cross-border dynamics are crucial to social, economic, and political life in many of these regions (see Schomerus & Titeca 2012: 7-8). This chapter is about the centrality of such cross-border dynamics. However, at the same time, we cannot deny that these dynamics are so important precisely because people in Yumbe, as explained in this dissertation, also have a strong orientation towards Uganda as a nation state and that their reference to marginalization is a dominant experience. Thus, both in terms of geography and political sentiment, the notion of living on the fringes, notwithstanding the importance of regional dynamics, remains meaningful.

Young people from Yumbe (and the larger West Nile region) have always been actively engaged in labour migration (Middleton 1965; Dak 1968). In the past, their predominant aim was to earn the cash required to pay taxes; or migration took place when land was scarce (Middleton 1965). Since 1925, with the blossoming of the economy in the south of the Uganda Protectorate, migrants primarily went there to work in the sugarcane and other industries (Dak 1968). People in the region of Yumbe also have a more recent history of engaging in a lively but perilous cross-border trade with south Sudan (see Meagher 1990; Leopold 2005a; Titeca 2006, 2007; Schomerus & Titeca 2012); and since the new state just to the north of Yumbe became independent in 2011, it has attracted many of the district's youth as temporary migrants.[304]

Despite the fact that at the time of my research, the perils involved in travelling and trying to make a living in the ROSS were many, as evidenced by the many horrendous anecdotes of violence perpetrated (without later prosecution) against foreigners in Juba,[305] this did not halt the frequent movements of my interlocutors to the ROSS. The high rate of mobility can be attributed predominantly to two factors. First, with south Sudan's secession from the Republic of Sudan in July 2011, hopes for reconstruction (read employment) and prosperity (read trade) increased, and developments (in the fields of business, development aid, UN support, etc.) rapidly offered even more promise.[306] Second, the eve of independence of the new country coincided with harsh conditions faced by people in Yumbe and elsewhere in Uganda. Since the Ugandan elections in February 2011, in which too much money had been spent on campaigning, civil servant salaries were being paid only after long delays, and the prices of basic commodities more than doubled.[307] Both factors greatly affected the life of common people in Uganda, and in Yumbe District it coincided with a very disappointing first rainy season, which further affected the local economy. The fact that money could hardly be earned in the rural local economy made people refer to Yumbe at this time as 'very dry'—meaning there was hardly any money in circulation.

Meanwhile, security in south Sudan, though still precarious, had slowly improved in the aftermath of the CPA signed in 2005.[308] Minefields had been cleared, and there had been more efforts to demobilize the now redundant Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/SPLM) combatants that used to menace migrants along the way.

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[304] Young people from Yumbe, however, do not form the only group of migrants from Uganda. Adult traders from Uganda are equally active across the border, and reference is also often made to the participation of Buganda from central Uganda in this migration.

[305] Own field notes; Schomerus & Titeca 2012; and 'Sudan denies rape and torture of Ugandans in Juba', Sudan Tribune, 23 September 2007, http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article23887 [accessed 1 October 2012].

[306] Expectations like these developments already inspired migration from the CPA from 2005 onwards (see Grant & Thompson 2013), but they became even higher after the independence of south Sudan.

[307] See Introduction.

[308] In 2007, one of my interlocutors was smuggling motorcycles from Congo to south Sudan. Young people like him would move in convoys because of insecurity and travel at high speeds to use as little fuel as possible and avoid roaming sections of the SPLA. Small roads were used to avoid tax authorities, but landmines were feared. My interlocutor told me in 2014 about the back pain that he still suffered after, on one of these journeys, he had driven into a crater caused by an explosion during the war and had had a serious fall.

Nevertheless, the stories of my interlocutors regarding their experiences with insecurity in the ROSS remained frightful. Schomerus and Titeca (2012) attributed the prevailing insecurity in South Sudan prior to its secession in 2011 to an 'inconclusive peace' situation,[309] and their analysis proved to remain painfully accurate when in December 2013 fighting broke out again in south Sudan.

In this chapter, I assess the local and contemporary characteristics of the massive mobility of youths from a marginal area in Uganda to the ROSS. While the major push and pull factors have been described above, a local assessment of this mobility proves very insightful and lays bare the intricate dynamics behind young people's mobility choices. The exact number of youths involved is difficult to establish, but during my fieldwork, reference to 'going to Juba' (when people spoke about their own intentions, brothers who had gone there, or people who had returned) came to increasingly dominate every spontaneous conversation I had with young people. This provided very rich data, especially around the end of Ramadan in 2011 when many migrants temporarily returned home for Id-al-Fitr, the Muslim religious holiday that marks the end of the month of fasting.

This chapter is divided into two major sections. In the first, I discuss the mobility of local youths and the various factors that triggered their large-scale mobility. The second part of the chapter contextualizes these moves as situated in a larger social, economic, and political terrain (see Vigh 2006), which simultaneously shaped and was being shaped by these youths as they navigated the volatile border zones in which they grew up. In order to understand why these young people tended to engage in such perilous forms of migration in such large numbers, however, first a word on insecurity is necessary.

DEALING WITH INSECURITY

I encountered a large number of narratives like the ones of Abori and Aluma that this chapter opens with, referring to the dangers faced by Ugandans in south Sudan. There are many stories referring to the thefts, rapes, and brutal murders that are faced by migrant workers in south Sudan, workers who are seen as 'stealing away' the new country's prosperity (i.e. its money). Despite the circulation of stories about a variety of risks facing Ugandans in Sudan, and the dangers involved in travelling there (e.g. there was an accident that killed 28 people from Yumbe in 2011 when their lorry got stuck in a river—accidents along the bad roads are common), many youths still engage in this hazardous mobility. It is therefore important to understand how people view the risks that are connected to their mobility and what they do to deal with these risks. But while the stories of returned migrants often referred to the dangers encountered in south Sudan, it also became clear that it was not the notion of *risk*, but rather the concept of *chance*, that held a more central role for my interlocutors. Second, we cannot deny the fact that their environment has always been volatile and that engaging in such kinds of environments has, to a certain extent, become normal for the people from Yumbe (see Vigh 2008 on

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[309] With this concept, Schomerus & Titeca build on the work of Mary Kaldor (2010) on 'Inconclusive Wars'.

chronic crisis). Therefore, instead of focusing on people's risk-taking behaviour, I argue that a multitude of collective historical experiences with hardship and challenges, combined with a lack of local possibilities for survival, informed my interlocutors' dispositions to engage with the volatile terrains of south Sudan.

The importance of chance over risk

The notion that my interlocutors were more chance-oriented than focused on risk emerged, among others, as the outcome of a recurrent discussion I had with my research assistant Charles. As I tended to end my messages and phone calls with him while he was in Kampala with the expression 'Take care', he objected almost angrily and corrected me on several occasions, saying that I should rather wish him to 'Take a *chance*'.

The strong focus on opportunities instead of risks returned in Abiriga's reply to my inquiry into why people take many risks in south Sudan: 'With those risks', he said, 'they hope to get better.' Repeating my own use of the term 'risk', he acknowledged that such risks exist in the migrations to Juba, but he emphasized that all migrants nevertheless engaged with them in the hopes of grasping an opportunity. This kind of behaviour, which is focused more on chance or opportunity than on risk, also often recurred in the descriptions of the behaviour of the people (many of whom were Aringa) who were engaged in informal cross-border trade in neighbouring Arua District (Titeca 2006). As Heitz Tokpa (2014: 36) explains with regard to risk versus opportunity:

> Opportunity-seeking infers an attitude towards *striving to obtain, rather than avoiding something*. In both hemispheres of this planet social actors employ risk-avoidance and opportunity-seeking strategies. It is a question of time, context and personal preferences as to what is more salient to us at any given moment.

Considering the economic conditions of life in Yumbe, it is hardly surprising that opportunity-seeking behaviour was prevalent and carried more value for locals than risk avoidance did. The orientation of young people in Yumbe can also not be understood without reference to the long history of poverty and the feeling of abandonment in the region, where people have for decades had the experience that they have to fend for themselves (Meagher 1990: 72-73; Lecoutere & Titeca 2007: 7). Often this meant that people invented and developed ingenious ways to survive economically (see for exampleTiteca 2006). The fact that the region has international borders that generate many opportunities for cross-border trade was crucial in the development of local people's survival strategies (ibid.; Leopold 2009).

The normalization of insecurity

Not only are the prevailing poverty and the deep roots of the local survival economy important to explain what could be considered high-risk migration, but equally, one could argue, it has become normal for people in Yumbe to engage with insecurity. Throughout

their lives, people in the region have been confronted with direct experiences and/or stories about forced displacements, the threat of loss of life and property, and abduction during periods of armed rebellion. From studying young people's expressions, it became clear they have become familiar with the idea that there is always a 'war'[310] taking place somewhere in the region and that this fact is considered normal by them. From their personal experiences, furthermore, people were well aware that the presence of refugees in a region means an increase in opportunities for small trade (Payne 1998; field notes, JB) and that war always comes with opportunities for business. One can perhaps argue that these experiences have deeply influenced people's habitus, or, as Mbembe and Roitman explain, in such contexts the experience of 'crisis' has become 'prosaic'. The need to improvise in daily life is seen as '[...] belonging at most to the domain of the obvious or self-evident, and at least to the banal or that which no longer evokes surprise' (1995: 326).

When compared with earlier collective and individual experiences, the risks one might encounter in south Sudan were experienced by young migrants as expected and were thus relativized:

> 'It is normal', Salim told me about the outbreak of renewed armed conflict in south Sudan in December 2013 and the fact that his brothers had been caught up in it in Abyei. He repeated: 'It's very simple for us. It's normal.' Two weeks later, Salim explained to me that his brothers had arrived back in Uganda safely but that they had lost their property. As he suggested, for the Aringa, the situation in south Sudan was at this point merely *a crisis of business*, not a crisis of life.[311] (Based on field notes of phone conversations with Salim, December 2013 and January 2014)

Salim's remarks, as well as the biographic narratives that I collected from other youths' trajectories in south Sudan, informed my reflections on the commonness of conflict in the region and the normality of upheaval and even war, which interlocutors expected to encounter. Furthermore, these conflicts had always concurred with the need to adapt to the changing political nature of the border region and to perhaps slightly or temporarily adjust one's trajectories (see for example Leopold 2009; Schomerus & Titeca 2012: 13-14).

One could argue that all of these factors together (the chance-oriented character of many Aringa, and the normalization of living in an insecure environment) help to explain the frequent mobility of youth (and others) from Yumbe to volatile places. Therefore, rather than focusing on how people deal with risks, this chapter seeks to explore further the particular factors that motivate young people from Yumbe to go to Juba, and thereafter explores what this tells us about the nature of the larger terrain in which they are engaged.

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[310] When talking about local ethnic conflicts in south Sudan or clan disputes in Uganda, interlocutors often referred to them as 'war'.

[311] This description is not fully accurate, however, for some people from Yumbe did also die in the fighting or faced hunger while staying in hiding for days from the violence taking place (Field notes, JB; 'Uganda to evacuate nationals from S. Sudan' http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/650693-uganda-to-evacuate-nationals-from-s-sudan.html [accessed 19 December 2013]).

FACTORS MOTIVATING MOBILITY

In order to explain what triggered young people to move from Yumbe and venture into the south of Sudan, three important categories of explanations were discerned in the process of analysing young people's work and life histories, and the stories of prospective migrants and those who returned. In brief, the first category concerns people's aspirations in the absence of access to opportunities, education, and/or jobs within Yumbe. This, in turn, is further related to how they built upon the social imagination of themselves as traders and as a particularly tough people[312] in order to access the opportunities across the border. The second category that emerged from the data refers to people moving in order to 'escape' being forced into marriage, or fleeing marital problems. The third category concerns people who moved away out of fear of deadly violence after engaging in crime or being accused of witchcraft. The first category overlaps with the latter two, since once one is on the move, one needs to rely on opportunities and toughness to survive.

In search of opportunities

> While travelling with Charles in a taxi from Arua to Yumbe, and after discussing the many Aringa people who go to Juba and Congo,[313] I asked him if the Ayivu (neighbouring Lugbara people living further south) also go to Juba and Congo in such large numbers. Charles explained: 'The Ayivu like their land so much, it is hard for them to leave it behind. For the Aringa, they try to adopt this Arab culture of being business people, and business cannot be done in one place. It needs movement.' Later, when I ask him to clarify why he thinks the Aringa want to adopt what he calls 'Arab business culture', he says: 'Aringas say they are the black Arabs who are traders by nature, which is why most of them are traders. Most of the leading Aringa businessmen are Muslims.' (Based on field notes, September 2013)

Above, Charles refers to a notion that frequently returns in historical accounts of the Aringa as being closely related to and/or mixed with the Nubi,[314] who were known not only as soldiers but also as excellent tradesmen, and he connects Yumbe's Muslim population in particular with trade. From historical sources, we know that in the early Islamized region of Yumbe District, trade (with Khartoum) was discouraged by the British out of fear of an increasing sphere of influence of the Mahdist Sudan[315] in Uganda.

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[312] See references to these notions below (trade) and in Chapter 5 (toughness).

[313] At that particular point (in September 2013), many people were moving to the Democratic Republic of Congo to a newly developing gold mining site; see also Omari's story below.

[314] Charles did not use the term 'Nubi', but rather 'Arab'. In Chapter 2, I challenge the relationship between the Aringa and the Nubi as it is proposed by non-Muslim Ugandans and Western researchers alike. The explanation that follows here in the text also complicates the direct links often assumed between the Aringa and Nubi: it is not their direct descent from Arab-Nubi people that explains their involvement in trade, but rather their predominant religion (Islam), which provided them the right networks in the past (to Nubi traders as well) and was a factor in their historical marginalization.

[315] See Allen & Reid (2014: 3)

However, due to the exclusion of Muslim children from Christian schools,[316] Muslims were thus also excluded 'from the skills necessary to advancement within the colonial system. The result was to reinforce the importance of commerce for the material advancement of the Islamised inhabitants of West Nile (Barnes, 1984: 142-3)' (Meagher 1990: 66).[317] Thus, as Meagher (1990) argues, through these colonial interventions trade became ever more important to the identity of the Muslim community in the region, of which the Aringa formed an important part. After this colonial period, Meagher refers in particular to the West Nile people seeking refuge in Sudan, and to their return in the second half of the 1980s as an influential incentive to the development of active cross-border trade in West Nile more generally. Harrell-Bond, writing about this period, indeed draws specific attention to the role of the Aringa as traders while the people from West Nile were refugees in exile in Sudan (1986).

This historical engagement with trade still informs the aspirations of many Aringa youth (often poorly educated) to become traders. Today, the barriers to education for Muslims are not the same as those in the past, and there are many Islamic schools. However, though many of my youth interlocutors wanted to complete their education, they often did not get the opportunity due to the activity of local rebel groups in the 1990s. This armed violence caused ruptures in their education trajectories and increased local poverty; making parents unable to keep their children in school in its aftermath (see chapters 3 and 4). Therefore, a trading *career* still informed a typical 'Aringa dream', an aspiration that shaped the orientations of local youth. Like the reference to warriorhood (see Chapter 5), trading in this region appeals to a person's toughness and strength and is something they can fall back on in a context of both adversity and scarcity of alternatives. Success stories such as that shared by Ratib (below) about an entrepreneurial 16-year-old he knew, would inspire others to go out and look for their chances:

> [...] and he was just there [in Juba], like that he stayed in the streets [...] engaged himself in some businesses and so on. And [then] he got a lot of money! We [recently] saw him in Arua. He came, he drove [...] with his [own] car [...] he is building a flat now! (Conversation with Ratib, 29 years old, BA degree, November 2011)

Stories such as these, involving luck and a 'career' in seizing petty trading opportunities, represent influential aspirations for other young people who have dropped out of school. They represent the possibility of turning the tide in one's favour by moving to places like Juba. And they portray the youth involved as tough and persistent, something the terrain requires.

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[316] People in Yumbe say that during the colonial period, Muslims were accepted in lower-school classes, but after a few years they would be made to adopt a Christian name, and that it was at this point that they would drop out of school. Schultz (2013: 404) pays some attention to the reasons why in Uganda 'Muslim children were generally disadvantaged by the existing educational system' that was particularly Protestant and Christian from its colonial inception.

[317] Meagher unfortunately does not provide the reference for 'Barnes 1984' in her article's reference list.

This 'knack for opportunities'[318] that people in Yumbe possessed was particularly relevant for, but not only reserved to, the poorly educated youth who were engaged in large numbers in these high cross-border mobility patterns at the time of my research.[319] Indeed, a growing group of university-educated youth in Yumbe were attracted to and hoped to be recruited for NGO jobs in south Sudan, since they had a very hard time finding educated employment in Uganda.[320] Furthermore, young people from Yumbe with vocational skills such as furniture making, welding, and construction—obtained predominantly through a post-conflict reconstruction programme run by UNIDO and PRAFORD[321] from 2006 to 2009—were also often said to have settled in Juba these days. There, where the construction sector was booming, their skills were in high demand compared with the traditional town of Yumbe, marked as it is by low infrastructural development. In other instances, educated and wealthier people might finance business ventures in south Sudan to be conducted by their poorly educated relatives, occasionally investing considerable sums of money in these projects and even without secure prospects of return on their investments.

The experiences of Omari (below) show that most of the trajectories of the young people who engaged in such opportunities were fragmentary and 'patchworked' together. In other words, they had personal histories that were marked by recurrent types of such forms of mobility. Like Omari, many of the young people who went to Sudan returned to Yumbe after a while, then went again, or went elsewhere in search of new opportunities.

Omari (29 years) went to school up to Senior 4.[322] Afterwards, he followed some mechanical training and managed to get a small job as a mechanic with an international NGO in 2007, when Yumbe District was still hosting quite a number of refugees from south Sudan. After the NGO left Yumbe and Omari lost his job, he and a friend left for south Sudan in 2008. In Juba, they barely managed. Omari survived in Juba for six months without a job and with only one set of clothes. He earned a little money only now and then when he could temporarily replace a friend as a taxi driver. Things changed, however, when he saw an announcement in a newspaper that an international NGO was looking for drivers. With his only set of clothes ('I was looking like a mad man', he claims), but having been able to bathe and borrow his friend's

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[318] Inspired by Scheper-Hughes' 'knack/talent for life' (1993/2008).

[319] Quite a number of women from Yumbe, for example, were skilled traders operating across borders, though they tended to travel less far than Juba and remained active primarily in the border markets.

[320] Most university-educated young people returned to Yumbe after their studies, hoping to find work with the local government or NGOs, but there were few of these jobs. Furthermore, most did not speak Luganda and believed that this impeded them in finding a job in Kampala; and due to decentralization, they also knew that it would be hard to find work in another district's local government. In general, the problem of unemployment among the more educated members of society is known to be high in Uganda. (See also 'Viewpoints: South Sudan jobs for Kenyans and Ugandans', by W. Muga, 18 March 2011, BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12710718 [accessed 18 September 2012])

[321] The program (Skills for Peace and Income (SKIPI) project) was supported by The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and its local partner in Yumbe, PRAFORD (Participatory Rural Action for Development).

[322] Senior 4 was a level that most of my interlocutors had not reached (many dropped out of school in Primary 7, Senior 1, or Senior 2).

shoes (he did not have any), he was hired. For more than a year he drove medical NGO staff from protected compounds to the field in various parts of south Sudan.

He talks about his job with pride and as if it offered him a wealth of experiences and, of course, a very reasonable income. After a certain period, however, he claims it became unsafe, as Sudanese colleagues were becoming more and more aware that the Ugandans in south Sudan were *taking their jobs*. He feared he was going to be poisoned[323] by his Sudanese colleagues, and when he was personally threatened by them he resigned and went back to Yumbe, where he was already married and had a child. With the money he had earned, he bought a car in Kampala—or rather, he paid the first instalment—and started a taxi business[324] between Yumbe and Koboko, which was not easy as there are not very many passengers in Yumbe[325] and there is quite a bit of competition. He keeps on the lookout for NGOs that might need a driver, but in the West Nile region there are very few such opportunities nowadays.[326]

> When I returned to Yumbe in 2013, he told me he had just been for a three-month stay in the north of the Democratic Republic of Congo, transporting goods to a site where a new goldmine was being rapidly developed. It involved transporting very heavy materials, working seven days a week, and having bad access to healthcare facilities in a region where there is a very high prevalence of malaria. He also struggled a lot with the languages used there: French and Lingala. He had come back to Yumbe because his contract finished, and since then he had been on the lookout for new opportunities. The larger part of the money he earned in Congo was used to pay off another instalment on his car, which is wearing out after a few years on the rough road to Koboko.[327] When talking with him and other young passengers in his taxi as we were on the road, his going to Congo appeared to be seen locally as a great opportunity. A young man in Omari's taxi complained that south Sudan was not the place to be any longer: 'If you stay there, they can easily kill you.' But according to Omari, the insecurity is particularly high only in south Sudan's capital Juba, and his younger brother is now in Aweil for work. (Based on a compilation of informal interviews with Omari, 2011–2013)[328]

Omari's trajectory reflects elements of hardship but also of luck. He was proud of his endurance, of surviving the poverty, hunger, and hardships in south Sudan and the DRC,

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[323] The fear of being poisoned by jealous south Sudanese colleagues was a recurrent topic in the stories of return migrants who had held 'educated jobs' in south Sudan.

[324] Taxi businesses are personal cars taking 5 to 6 passengers at a time, 4 (or 5) in the back, 1 (or 2) next to the driver in front.

[325] People in Yumbe are very mobile, but the majority prefer the cheaper form of transport: loading onto a pick-up truck with their luggage and taking a different road, which takes them directly to Arua or other places (local markets or border posts).

[326] This lack of employment opportunities with NGOs is in contrast with the late 1990s, as described by Leopold (2005a).

[327] When the road has been worked on (which happens approximately once a year), it takes taxis around 30 minutes to reach Koboko. During my last visit in 2013 during the rainy season, the road was full of large potholes filled with water, and the same trip would take at least 1 hour and 30 minutes.

[328] While he was in south Sudan, Omari had spent time in Aweil. His knowledge of the area had helped his brother to go there instead of to Juba to look for work opportunities.

though he primarily saw it all as quite normal. In his narrating style, he conveyed strongly a non-questioning attitude vis-à-vis the hardships faced; they were taken for granted, belonging to an environment that he knew and regarded as normal. Many interlocutors displayed a similar disposition to that of Omari: they possessed a knack for pursuing opportunities fed by a social imagination of themselves as traders and as tough, and they demonstrated a high level of endurance in their work trajectories while experiencing an absence of opportunities at home. Young people flexibly adapted to changing circumstances according to where the best opportunities were to be found. To a certain extent, the risks were being weighed, but these ranged from 'extreme' to 'normal', as Omari's last remarks about his brother in Aweil show. At the same time, as with Omari's fear of poisoning, at some point many migrants do return to Yumbe. They return when they judge their personal security to be at stake and/or when opportunities are cut off. Return is often temporary, until the harsh conditions of life in Yumbe provide a new motivation to leave; and then, building further on their knack for seizing opportunities and on their already accumulated experience, they identify new opportunities elsewhere.

Intimate crises

Something else was actively driving young men, in particular, from Yumbe to places like Juba. The following excerpt from my field notes[329] introduces this dominant social dynamic:

> While waiting in a taxi for more passengers together with Aluma, he tells me about the broker who is trying to get another taxi filled up in front of us. 'Sometimes he stays here; sometimes he stays in Kampala', he says, explaining that the boy he knows well has impregnated a girl in Arua, where he used to stay; and, therefore, whenever he receives news that the parents of the girl are looking for him, he needs to move. He doesn't stay in one place. 'There are many boys like that.' I ask him 'Where do they go? To Kampala?' Aluma replies: 'Kampala […] even Juba!' Arriving at the compound of Abiriga together an hour later, it appears that Abiriga's 16-year-old niece is pregnant and had to drop out of Senior 2. Her boyfriend, from the same secondary school, is suggested to be on the run, probably to Juba. (Field notes, 12 August 2012)

In this and the following section, I analyse *escapes*—the need to be 'not here but elsewhere', provoked by unplanned pregnancies, the deep distress caused by looking after one's family under circumstances of extreme poverty, and by transgressions of legal and/or social norms.

Boys on the run and absentee fathers

> In 2013, when I am able to return to Abiriga's home, I ask him about his niece who was pregnant the year before. He tells me she lost the little baby only two weeks after birth to tetanus, and she suffered a lot when her breasts became infected because of the milk that was

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[329] Part of these same field notes are also used in Chapter 4.

still coming. Abiriga told me in 2012 that he suspected that the boy had gone to Juba and suggested that he and his niece might still be in touch. One year later he conveys the same idea. (Conversation with Abiriga, 31 years old, October 2013)

In cases where boys and young men impregnate a girl before marriage, very many tend to run away. Nowadays, they go to south Sudan, while in the past they would go to Kampala or, to a lesser extent, other Ugandan towns (Dak 1968). They tend to run away because it is likely that they will be forced into marriage by their own clan and/or the clan of the girl. Either that, or cows (between one and five) have to be paid for the damage done to the girl's reputation and as compensation for the money invested in education by her family.[330] In the case of Abiriga's niece, it was suggested that the boy and the girl were still in touch. Oftentimes, however, contact is broken and young people's love relations are discontinued at this critical moment. While young men move away, often dropping out of school and looking for work elsewhere (I call these moves following intimate crises *escapes*), young women often stay behind in Yumbe and struggle to get by. The case of Fahida (below) reveals the difficulties that young women face after the *escapes* of their boyfriends:

Fahida (19 years old) gave birth to two babies in two years from two different fathers, boys who both 'ran to Sudan'. Initially in 2012, Fahida once approached me as I sat down to take a rest at her mother's shop with the aim of engaging in small talk with the women there, as I often did. 'My mum probably hasn't told you but I dropped out of school because I had a baby boy last month.' I can't remember having met Fahida before, but apparently she knows me as a regular visitor to her mother's shop and she thinks that her mother is ashamed of her. Fahida then explains that she dropped out of school and that the boy is on the run, that he works just across the border in south Sudan in Nimule—another one of the country's booming trading towns—as a *boda-boda* driver. Apparently, he took to his heels when he found out that she had fallen pregnant.

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[330] On some occasions, the boy is given the choice of whether or not to marry (though not marrying still means that his clan will have to pay cattle), while the girl is always dependent on the decision of the boy, his clan, and/or her parents. Young men choose to run away either because they do not want to marry or fear pressure and condemnation by the clans, and also because they are ashamed about giving their clan the burden of paying cattle for a girl that they (perhaps) never intended to marry. From the perspective of the girl, such an arrangement means that it does not matter whether the sexual relationship was consented to or not; the clans are responsible for the decision for marriage, even when rape is at stake. Traditionally, cases of 'defilement' between two clans (when the girl is under 18, see footnote 339) are often solved through marriage or compensation with cattle, as people have very low trust in the police's ability to handle such matters justly or fairly, and, furthermore, they would have to pay for all of the investigations themselves. As the Refugee Law Project describes the situation: '[…] the way in which interlocutors defined and subsequently dealt with the issue of "defilement" was closely linked to forced/early marriage: in the majority of incidents, "justice" was seen to have been achieved either if the girl was married off to the alleged "defiler" upon receipt of an acceptable bride price, or if (where marriage was not possible) compensation was paid to the family of the girl. In cases where compensation was sought, a number of interlocutors linked it, just like marriage, to the social standing of the girl at the time of "defilement" and her potential within the community. In most cases, compensation or marriage was perceived to be synonymous with justice. While this kind of justice does not redress the victims, it was seen as meeting societal demands for tangible justice and providing some sort of closure to the issue at stake. In short, justice was seen as communal rather than individual' (Refugee Law Project 2007: 10-11).

Surprisingly, a year and four months later, when I visit Yumbe again in 2013, Fahida has a second child. The story is the same. This boy too, she suggests, ran to south Sudan. Fahida is now running a small improvised food stall close to her mother's shop. She has clearly been helped by her mother to establish it, but now the stall is disorganized after the heavy rains in October. The plastic roof and sides of the little shack are gone, and in the few days of my visit I do not witness any efforts to reconstruct the shed. Fahida herself is sick; one can see this from the worn-out expression on her face, the tiredness with which she carries the newborn on her back, and the cannula attached to the back of her hand with plasters. 'Typhoid and malaria' is the most common joint diagnosis in Yumbe, and most people treat it by going on a drip for five days in a row, administered at one of the few private pharmacies/clinics in Yumbe town. The firstborn baby boy cries all the time, wanting to be held, trying to climb her leg, and draining her last energy. 'Our ladies age very fast', a young man and friend comments, while observing Fahida moving around. (Field notes, June 2012 and October 2013)

While Fahida's experience can perhaps be considered extreme, these kinds of pregnancies are common, and her and Abiriga's niece's experiences unavoidably draw attention to the situation of the children born out of these intimate encounters. Absentee fathers who do not contribute to the upbringing of their children are common, and 'Juba'—at least in 2013—had become a metaphorical synonym for many husbands' absences from the reproductive trajectories of their 'wives' and the lives of their children, born and unborn. On other occasions, their absence was painfully real, as the following excerpt shows:

Juma and I run into a distressed young woman. Her worn-out slipper is torn and she is trying to fix it, even though it is clearly beyond repair. The woman has been walking from the hospital (quite far from where we are) carrying her sick child on her back, but the cloth with which she had tied her child to her back was now paining her. Since she is pregnant, the weight of the child on her back pulls the cloth very tight above her large belly. Upon our inquiries, she tells us that her husband has left their home to go Sudan because of poverty. Juma gives her UGX 1,000 to take a *bicycle boda* (bicycle taxi) to get home. (Field notes, October 2011)

Such observations echo the words of young men, both married and unmarried, who often conveyed the despair they felt when they were unable to provide for their families and had to watch their children 'cry from hunger'. This feeling of uselessness often made them plot an escape (see Chapter 5). Young men escape as a consequence of what I call *intimate crises*, within which lies a *vital conjuncture* (Johnson-Hanks 2002) or decisive moment that comes with finding out about a girlfriend's pregnancy. According to Johnson-Hanks' definition (ibid. 871), a vital conjuncture constitutes:

[…] a socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives. It is a temporary configuration of possible change, duration of uncertainty and potential. Although most social life may be thought of as conjunctural, in the sense that action is conjoined to a particular, temporary manifestation of social structure, vital conjunctures are particularly critical durations when more than usual is in play, when the futures at stake are significant.

In the context of Yumbe, upon finding out about a pregnancy, a young man has to make a critical decision (Johnson-Hanks 2002, 2005; van der Sijpt 2011). Many times, the young man decides to leave his girlfriend and unborn child behind and go to Juba.

I categorize the specific vital conjunctures that were so dominant with regard to migration from Yumbe as part of intimate crises because, on many occasions, love between youths was at stake (and in crisis) and/or intimate boundaries had been transgressed in premarital sexual relations. For another group of youth, intimate crises occurred as a result of abuse and/or divorce. The crisis situation was then continued in cases where the young man/spouse opted out, leaving his girlfriend/wife and child(ren) behind, often in a very precarious position. For the young men navigating this vital conjuncture, escape was an opportunity to start relatively anew. The socially structured zone of opportunities (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 871) in this context was, during the course of my fieldwork, predominantly shaped by the developments in the border region and the normality of outmigration in search for opportunities, and it thus provoked many young men in particular to decide to go to south Sudan.

The concept of intimate crises prompting specific vital conjunctures thus captures an important aspect of the mobility that arises from the unwanted/unplanned pregnancies that were so frequent in Yumbe, and the inability of most young men to care for their offspring (as shown in the last case study above).[331] The concept furthermore draws attention to youths' reproductive challenges and encounters with sexual violence and clan pressure, all of which particularly impact the lives of both born and unborn children in Yumbe, a topic that deserves more attention in future research.[332] In such a socio-economic and gendered crisis environment, where young men are highly likely to take to their heels, women, albeit on a lesser scale, occasionally engage in similar escapes—as we see below.

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[331] Contrary to Van der Sijpt's (2011) focus on young women's navigation of pregnancies, and pregnancy interruptions as vital conjunctures, my focus draws attention to the decisive moments faced in particular by boys and young men in Yumbe and on the 'socially structured zones of possibility' (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 871) that informed *their* navigation during such vital conjunctures.

[332] With regard to labour migration, John Middleton, writing about the Lugbara in the 1950s, refers to the absence of young men leading to 'serious repercussions for the effective social life of the community from which they come' (1960b: 450)—and this absence included the absence of husbands. At the time, land pressure and the need to earn money to pay taxes (levied in the region since 1918 but leading to labour migration only in the mid-1920s) motivated migration, according to Middleton (1960b). The emigration from the Lugbara region southwards diminished as a cash-crop economy developed in West Nile, allowing for other economic opportunities, at least in the late 1950s (Dak 1968: 67). Dak also refers to the trend described in this chapter: '[…] persons deeply involved in family quarrels, and those accused of witchcraft or those that incur personal misfortune like impregnating a girl, all go "south"' (ibid. 68). In the south of Uganda, the Lugazi and Kakira sugarcane plantations were particularly attractive to Lugbara migrants (see ibid. 70). For the Aringa, Dak notes that land pressure was not as high as in other parts of Lubaraland, while out-migration was high. She seems to relate the lower land pressure to slave-raiding and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) in the 1920s and 1930s, which apparently led to the colonial government's 'moving' people to other places. See ibid. 77.

Divorce and absent mothers

It is not only young men who 'run to Sudan', and intimate crises in Yumbe affect not only adolescents. I end this analysis of how intimate crises motivate escapes at decisive moments by describing the experience of Lydia, whom I followed for three years, to draw attention to female migration from Yumbe to south Sudan, which also took place and often followed divorce or other forms of marital crises, such as domestic violence.[333]

> During my first fieldwork visit in 2010, I encountered Lydia one night on her bike with a mattress rolled up and tied to the carrier. She was moving into her new home with her new *husband*,[334] whom she seemed very much in love with. Lydia already had three young children from two different fathers. The names she had given them, not uncommonly in Yumbe, referred to the distress and poverty experienced in these marriages.
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> When I returned in February 2011, I spent my first evening catching up with Lydia and her new husband Apangu. He was a UPDF soldier, who had previously been based near the Central African Republic in pursuit of Joseph Kony. We later attend a party together and they seem very close and in love. Lydia seems happy, and the mud brick walls of her hut are decorated with Catholic prayer posters and calendars, as well as a poster (not unpopular in those days in Yumbe) depicting 'Middle Eastern heroes': Saddam Hussein, his sons, and others in military attire.[335] 'That one is Apangu's', she explains, pointing to the poster. While her husband is a Muslim, Lydia is Christian and only occasionally wears the black velvet headscarf so popular among young women in Yumbe at the time. Other times she wears sneakers and jeans and leaves her hair untied. Occasionally we joke about us being sisters, me the elder, as I am one year older than she is. 'Jonna, you have to produce!' she exclaims every time that we talk and my age (at that time 29) is brought up. I ask her if she is ready to have another child with her new husband and she says: 'Of course. It's normal!'
>
> But in July 2011, things suddenly turn sour. By accident, she finds a document among his properties stating his HIV-positive status. Lydia panics completely, but keeps silent while going to the clinic almost every day to get herself tested. While the test results are negative, she is anxious and continues to go. During this period, she starts talking to me about going to Juba. After a while, to protect herself, she decides to inform his clan members, who propose a separation for three months to give Lydia time to establish whether she has been infected or not. In these three months, she talks about Juba with me more and more often. Nevertheless, it is a secret; she has plans to leave without informing her husband or other members of her family. She probes me to find out if I think it is bad if she leaves one day, without informing her husband. I express my worry about what would become of her children, and about the stories

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[333] Sometimes it was suggested to me that more women than men from Yumbe could be found in south Sudan and that they were all working as prostitutes. These comments, which came from men, could be understood either in terms of 'moral panic' or as describing a more hidden dynamic. According to my own estimates, the movement of women from Yumbe to south Sudan was happening on a much smaller scale than that of men (when we exclude cross-border traders who did not settle in south Sudan but made visits only to local markets), and the women whose migration stories I was able to find (like Lydia) took petty jobs in Juba and did not work as prostitutes.

[334] At the time they were not yet married; later they married in front of the imam. No traditional wedding was celebrated for Lydia's third wedding, and her new husband also had a wife elsewhere in Uganda, where he had previously been stationed as a soldier.

[335] Such posters were popular at the time in Yumbe and in Uganda at large (see Kagoro 2013).

that Ugandan women in Juba end up in prostitution. But she shares with me that she has two aunts in south Sudan with normal jobs. A female friend and neighbour is her accomplice, and her neighbour's mother offers to take her oldest son (8 years old) to school in her remote village, where schooling is not expensive, while plans are made to return the youngest one to Lydia's mother in the village. He is not yet of school-going age. Her eldest, a daughter, has already been living with an aunt for some time.

Lydia's marital crisis coincides with her situation of having tried many different small businesses in Yumbe, the starting capital for which was provided by her third husband. For example, she tried running her own 'hotel' (cooking food and preparing tea in Yumbe town in a hired room in an unfinished building/shelter), and later she tried trading in avocados and cassava, a business for which she took a loan from the women's group at the church and travelled between a market near Arua and local markets in Yumbe. None of these businesses lasted long, nor were they successful. This conjuncture perhaps accelerates her move to Juba, as there seems no chance for her to support herself and the three children properly in Yumbe and her marriage is in a mess. While they are living apart, her husband often knocks on her door at night when he is drunk and screams that she should let him enter. When she refuses to do so, he accuses her of hiding another man in the house. The situation has become unbearable.

Lydia plots her escape and takes a loan from the women's savings group she normally attends every Saturday. Her aim is to buy synthetic hair in Arua to sell in Juba and to pay at the border for entry: UGX 80,000.[336] Even though she has two aunts in south Sudan and her elder brother tends to travel there as well for business, she is not particularly well informed of their whereabouts or contacts. But then one day, before the three months are over, she is gone.

Around one week later she calls me from Juba and explains that she initially started cooking for a Ugandan woman who sold food at a Juba market. Later, when I visit her in Juba in November 2011, she has found work in the construction sector. The work is heavy and spoils her hands, but she earns relatively well. She does not know yet that she will soon have to stop this work as she will become pregnant again. She lives with an aunt who has left many children behind in Yumbe and sells food dishes at the market. They live in Jebel, the immigrant neighbourhood famous for its disappearances of foreigners, and as I leave the neighbourhood after a few hours we are harassed by three civilian-clothed, aggressive, self-proclaimed security agents in their car, who want me to enter it and take off with them. As I refuse and try to stay polite to the man behind the wheel, the others interrogate Lydia and her aunt from their position inside the car. Lydia and her aunt fabricate a neutral, non-Ugandan identity on the spot. They claim they are south Sudanese; Lydia says her father is a Kaliko from Morobo in south Sudan and her mother a Ugandan. They have long learned how to deny their Ugandan identity for reasons of security in Juba.

In Juba, Lydia told me she would return to Yumbe only after having earned UGX 1 million to buy a plot of land in Yumbe town. Even though she indicates that the prices for plots have risen now to 2 million, she needs at least 1 million to return and make a first payment. What else can she do, she asks me. How else will she provide her children with a home? Being a single mother, there is no one who will provide for her. (Based on a compilation of field notes, July 2010 – November 2011)

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[336] Around EUR 23.50 at the time.

Letting the dust settle

In this section I have explained how some of the motivations for migration to Juba are the result of intimate crises. I claim that they are rather desperate moves, after close and intimate relations (or experiments therewith in premarital relationships) fail and/or collapse into crises (unplanned pregnancy or marital conflict). The sudden departures or escapes are survival strategies for the migrants, who identify Juba not only as far enough from home to be safe, but at the same time as presenting opportunities.

These moves also echo the notion that a participant in an FGD expressed when he tried to explain what 'being Aringa' entailed:

> […] and they [Aringas] always withdraw […] they don't want to be involved in a problem for long. Like one can even decide and leave the family and go and settle somewhere without thinking back. That is kind of Aringa. (FGD on Aringa history, 10 June 2011)[337]

To turn one's back on a difficult situation and start all over again somewhere else was identified by the young man in the FGD above as something typically Aringa. Yet, in most cases, return to Yumbe was possible. Those who went to Juba as a consequence of an intimate crisis did count on returning someday. Not only would they be in a better position after returning somewhat wealthier from south Sudan, but at the same time there was in many cases a strong belief that, with time, the conflict between boys and parents or partners would cool down. In a way, time was being bought by young men (and women) as they fled temporarily to another town or city.

The possibility for return was more questionable in Lydia's case, for she never repaid her loan to the women's group—the money she took to travel to south Sudan—and she went on to have a child with a Sudanese man in Juba. In 2013, I was informed that Lydia had visited Yumbe at Christmas in 2012 with her baby boy, but only briefly. It was suggested that she had avoided staying in Yumbe town and went only to her village, where she brought money for school fees for her children and material support for her mother. Nevertheless, the notion that temporary distance can with time dissolve conflicts motivated many escapes, which are perhaps best seen as, potentially, only temporary exit strategies.

Escaping prosecution and retribution

I now turn to some other triggers for escape, which also need to be taken into account. Above we have seen that due to intimate crises, many young men were engaged in a form of flight, temporary or otherwise. There is an overlap here with another social dynamic that caused people to move to south Sudan during the research period (and to other places at other times). These expulsions (which were sometimes self-expulsions) were

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[337] Narratives about people who in the past migrated for work to the sugarcane plantations in southern Uganda and who never returned ' home' but were buried there were shared with me occasionally (see also Middleton 1960b: 450).

provoked by transgressions of the law or local codes of conduct. On a communal level, for example, if a clan member was accused of witchcraft practices (*joki joki*), clans could ask the person (after an extensive clan meeting) to leave for a designated period of time. His/her temporary disappearance could be promoted to prove to the clan that the accusations were false. This happened within the family of some of my interlocutors, when the clan elders and all other men in the family had sat down to discuss accusations of witchcraft against one of their members. His face had been seen by some people as strangling them in their sleep, and other inexplicable things that were also associated with him had occurred in their compounds at night. At the end of the family meeting, the man was expelled for one year. He went to settle in Arua Town, and his wife and children were supposed to be looked after by the clan. After my return to the field a year later, I asked one of my interlocutors whether the man had returned. He told me 'not yet', but stated he could return anytime now, his name having been cleared.[338] In this case, the man was asked to leave; on other occasions, such people go into hiding—and south Sudan is an interesting place to do so.

South Sudan attracts not only escapees from intimate crises and witchcraft accusations; Juba was often referred to as the place where criminals from Yumbe (as well as other parts of Uganda) go into hiding. They could be thieves, defilers, or rapists who had transgressed local and/or national moral codes of conduct. On many occasions, people who had committed crimes in Yumbe were assumed to have taken off to south Sudan in order to escape being found by the police (see also Refugee Law Project 2007: 8). Often, those staying behind did not even see the point in attempting to try to catch them, knowing the criminals would have long crossed the border.

A recurrent and often reported crime was defilement.[339] For example, on one occasion I was shocked when I returned in 2013 and attended a meeting of a CBO in Yumbe. I asked if one of the members was about to come and was then told that he had 'run to Sudan'. The man I had known before as a kind man and father of four, I was told, had escaped to south Sudan after defiling a schoolgirl at the primary school where he

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[338] In sending the man away for a while, not only did the clan intend to diffuse the accusations, but they had probably also saved his life, for witchcraft accusations not infrequently lead to mob justice and death (Allen 1991, 2012, 2014; RLP 2007; TPO 2008). Indeed, during my fieldwork, I was shown a picture on a mobile phone of a woman found beheaded the night before, for she was believed to have been a witch. Other times, stories reached me of similar practices in the recent past (field notes, JB).

[339] In Uganda this term is widely used to refer to '"sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of eighteen". Death is the maximum penalty for such an offence. This provision of the Penal Code also makes attempted defilement a crime punishable by up to eighteen years in prison, "with or without corporal punishment", as defined in the Penal Code.' For more information and the gendered nature of the offense, see RLP (2007: 9). People in West Nile tend to use the term more broadly: 'to cover a wide spectrum of social scenarios and alleged crimes, from the rape of girls under the age of 18, to consensual sex that had come to the attention of the girl's family (generally as a result of her becoming pregnant)' (ibid. 10). While 'use of force' was not explicitly mentioned in the Penal Code, nor necessarily in people's use of the term, the 'sexual abuse of young girls is a major and growing concern' that cannot be denied (ibid.). Hereafter, I will use the term defilement in inverted commas ('defilement') to indicate the fact that we are dealing with a local use and definition of the concept as it occurs in the Penal Code. The concept has the disadvantage of often being a euphemism for rape, but since the concept is used more broadly locally (occasionally including, as mentioned above, consensual sex against the wishes of a girl's family), I cannot replace 'defilement' by rape.

worked as a teacher. Offenders like him face the risk of being beaten or killed in acts of frenzied mob justice in Yumbe. Nevertheless, according to my observations, and as stated above, people who ran away with large sums of money (during election time, for example, with money that was meant for political party 'mobilizers'), or those who had impregnated a girl, were able to return after a while when the dust had settled. It so happened, for example, that one of my interlocutors, after having become deeply involved as one of the instigators of violence in a local land conflict between two clans, in which his group had set several houses ablaze, went into hiding. Initially, he stayed in the bush near his home during the daytime and felt safe enough to return home after nightfall to sleep there. But a year later, he explained to me that after one week of hiding in such a way he had decided to go to Juba 'because of pressure'. He did not feel at ease in Yumbe, because the police were looking for him and he could not move freely. Even though he actually had a home in another town in Uganda, he chose not to go there (where he could have been traced) but rather chose to go to Juba, and even ended up in Rumbek (another one of south Sudan's larger towns) for a while, selling phone credit with a group of Ugandan youths, some from Yumbe, others from south-western Uganda. Within a year, after some bad experiences[340] in Juba and Rumbek, he returned to Yumbe and settled back in without any problems. The police were no longer on the lookout for him, and the other clan's members, although not content with the outcome of the conflict settlement, did greet members of his clan again in the small trading centre, in which both clans' members had to spend time in order to connect to the outside world.

Behaviours such as these—running away from problems and from local prosecution after transgressing social or legal norms—have occurred for a long time and should not be seen as a particularly new phenomenon in Yumbe. Middleton (1960: 333), for example, also refers to labour migration as a conflict-handling strategy (involving temporary or more long-term absence) for the Lugbara in the 1950s and 1960s. Sometimes these self-expulsions were of indefinite duration (recall the statement in the FGD fragment above: 'one can even decide and leave the family and go and settle somewhere without thinking back. That is kind of Aringa.'). For example, it was often mentioned to me that the *real* perpetrators of violence during the various armed rebellions had never returned to Yumbe. Some had moved to another region,[341] while

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[340] He referred to a violent confrontation in a taxi with Dinka men at dawn, when he refused to give away his seat in the taxi that they wanted. He also referred to life in Rumbek as extremely harsh, living in half-constructed houses with a lot of youths, being expelled from the house at the owner's will in the middle of the night, and his peers being stung by scorpions. This made him reflect: 'Why am I living under these conditions, as if I don't have a home?'—and thus he decided to return to Uganda.

[341] An Aringa man working for an NGO related on 5 August 2010: 'Reconciliation meetings were held [after renouncing rebellion in 2002], but some of them resettled [elsewhere] because of serious atrocities [committed]. They settled in Kigumba, Bweyale, Kampala […] avoiding the community.' He then went on to narrate a specific case of a man who went to hide in Kigumba for three years and then came back. The specific reasons these towns (Kigumba and Bweyale) were so often mentioned as hideouts for people who had transgressed local norms have not become clear to me, though some people referred to Aringa people having bought land there and working in the sugarcane industry. Indeed, Dak, writing in 1968, refers to Lugbara people settling in Bunyoro (the region in which the towns mentioned above lie), without demarcating a specific period: 'In Bunyoro where population is sparse, land has been used as a means of attracting more settlers by local government' (1968: 68). Tobacco growing was a particularly favourite occupation for Lugbara immigrants there

others were now seen in Yei and Juba, according to my travelling interlocutors. Mobility in the form of expulsion or self-expulsion can thus be understood as a way of dealing with the transgressions of local moral norms, or with criminality according to national laws, by communities and/or individuals, and it should be understood as a strategy to avoid open conflict.[342]

DISCUSSION: FRONTIER TERRAINS, FRONTIER PRACTICES

Contrary to studies about regions where young people have to engage and live in the midst of insecure terrains (Vigh 2006; Finnström 2008; Berckmoes 2014), it is remarkable that many young people in Yumbe actively searched for and engaged with such insecure terrains as Juba and elsewhere in south Sudan *because* of the turmoil and chaos there. Ironically, perhaps, these terrains were associated with lucrative opportunities and/or were seen as the best places to hide out. Local conditions for youth in Yumbe at the time of my research were not easy, both in terms of economics and with regard to their often poverty-related unstable love relationships or marriages, as I have shown above. Such a situation, as well as criminal behaviour, created conditions that triggered the need to 'flee'—or 'seek asylum in Juba', as Ratib ironically framed it—to go away and wait for the dust to settle, and to avoid local conflict (in cases of unaccepted love relationships) and mob justice (with regards to accusations of 'defilement', theft, or witchcraft). Mobility was obviously a solution to many different problems; and in their need for mobility, young people relied on the specific terrain they grew up in, which at the same time was constantly changing shape (Titeca 2009). This continuously changing geo-political-economic topography formed the terrain of action (Vigh 2006: 12, referring to Ingold 2000) for people, old and young, in Yumbe; the terrains shaped their actions, while their actions shaped the terrains at the same time. But there is more to understand about this concept of terrain, as shown below.

Frontier terrains

It is important to comprehend the larger region that my young interlocutors were engaged with as a *frontier terrain*. At the time of my research, people in Yumbe saw south Sudan as being in the process of becoming independent, as a virgin terrain full of opportunities and thus as a frontier terrain in the sense in which the term is used by Anna Tsing (2005: 27):

(ibid. 73-74). Dak also refers to 'European owned plantations' attracting Lugbara labour to Bunyoro in the late 1920s. (ibid. 69)

[342] National legislative laws were a little less relevant because, as argued above, in many cases people sought to solve what were seen as inter-clan problems themselves (for example, in cases of 'defilement') rather than involve the police. It was the general experience that the police would not act if the complainant could not pay for fuel and the investigation, and they were furthermore seen as vulnerable to bribes from the richer parties in the conflict (field notes, JB; RLP 2007).

> Frontiers are unregulated because they arise in the interstitial places made by collaborations among legitimate and illegitimate partners: armies and bandits; gangsters and corporations; builders and despoilers. They confuse the boundaries of law and theft, governance and violence, use and destruction.[343]

Even though Tsing focuses on a specific type of frontier—namely a capitalist frontier in the rainforests of Indonesia, 'edges where the expansive nature of extraction comes into its own' (ibid.)—many of her descriptions are useful to describe the frontier *process* in which Yumbe was embedded, both during my fieldwork and in the past. A lack of regulation, the presence of legitimate and illegitimate actors, and fascinating forms of collaborations (Tsing 2004) have shaped not only the terrain, but the processes in which this region has been and still is embedded.[344] For example, the imaginative projects of outsiders (such as hunters and ivory and slave traders; see Soghayroun 1981; Leopold 2005a, 2009) already long ago were influential in shaping the region—the former Lado Enclave (see Leopold 2009; also Chapter 2 this dissertation)—as a frontier, ready for processes of exploration and exploitation in which the local people became either collaborators in or victims of violence. One of the characteristics of frontiers is that they are imagined as 'empty' territory—belonging to no one, non-governed spaces without inhabitants to pay attention to—yet also as full of resources ready to be exploited. In those early days, ivory and slaves legitimized exploration, settlement, violence, abduction, and trade.

To take a giant leap in time, my interlocutors today expected to 'land on some money' in south Sudan, particularly in Juba. The border region, which was already shaped by insecurity after decades of war and for which 'peace' had only partly resulted in increased security (see Schomerus & Titeca 2012), became increasingly insecure through new developments. Oil, humanitarian aid, and development aid in particular have brought resources to south Sudan that are desired by those in Uganda's marginal border regions. In the process of a large group of people searching for opportunities, the routes that lead to south Sudan, and particularly to neighbourhoods in Juba, have become particularly unsafe. Many people, local and newcomers, are 'complicit' in shaping the frontier as an insecure place in order to reap its benefits (see Tsing 2004). This is possible because to a certain extent there is a lack of regulation in south Sudan, which leads to violent attempts to exert control—enacted by a state still coming into being (De Vries 2012), a country

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[343] Others have spoken about south Sudan's capital Juba as a 'frontier zone', a place conjured as an 'empty space', a territory of expansion awaiting the establishment of a new social order (de Vries 2012). De Vries approaches Juba as a frontier zone of state building and expansion. I build more on Tsing's (2005) reference to the frontier as explained in the text and to the terrain as used by Vigh (2006).

[344] This is not so much the process of social formation and ethnogenesis that Kopytoff (1987) is concerned with in his 'African frontier thesis'. However, some characteristics of the migration described in this chapter (escaping witchcraft accusations / fighting) correspond to his model of the reasons for the social formation of 'new' African societies through the moving into new territories. As shown above, however, many of my interlocutors were, with time, able to return home. Some indeed stayed behind but did not necessarily form new social groups in the sense Kopytoff was trying to understand them; rather, ethnic difference as opposed to ethnic convergence characterizes the social landscape in Juba.

experiencing an inconclusive peace (Schomerus & Titeca 2012). Parts of my research, as I show below, indicate that migrants—in their sometimes exploitative search for rapid accumulation—can become instigators of more insecurity, reproducing their imaginative project through participation in the 'gold rush'.

People from Yumbe saw the slowly improving (in terms of safety) terrain across the border as a virgin terrain for trade, a relatively unregulated space that could be appropriated for economic gain and exploration. Despite their vulnerability in south Sudan at times, interlocutors knew how to make use of the unregulated terrain amidst a proliferation of opportunities. By referring above to their 'knack for opportunities', I argue that people in Yumbe tapped into their habitus of deeply embodied and embedded familiarity with such an environment as a resource (Meagher 1990; Scott 1998; Titeca 2006, 2009) that they could use to navigate such particular terrains.

But the terrain of Juba and the larger south Sudan should not be seen as disconnected from Yumbe. Mobile people connect Yumbe to the frontier terrain and the frontier to Yumbe. Actors active in both places, such as traders and criminal youths, mean that Yumbe is part of the frontier terrain. Together, people on both sides of the border, as well as their respective armies, entrepreneurs, and enterprises give form to frontier practices that have been taking shape for over a century, when the borders were unlike they are now or, for example, later when the SPLA was seen frequently in northern Uganda (see Leopold 2005a; Finnström 2008: ch. 2). Yumbe was at the time of my research, and always has been, part of this frontier terrain. This was already the case when Arab slave traders in the late nineteenth century were removing children from their villages at dawn in what is today Yumbe District (Leopold 2009, 2005a); when Yumbe rebels were raiding the terrain in south Sudan in the 1990s (see chapters 2 and 3 on the UNRF and UNRF II); and more recently, when Yumbe migrants were forced to return in December 2013 when fighting broke out in south Sudan (see example below). People are and have been actively navigating the opportunities as well as the need to escape within this vast terrain for over a century at least.

In other words, in order to grasp the full complexity and interrelatedness of the terrain, it is important to note that while they are much harassed in Sudan, one could at the same time question how *escapees* and *expelled youths* from Yumbe themselves contribute to the insecurity in Juba. How is it possible, for example, for some young Aringas to return to Yumbe after only a few months in south Sudan with their own new motorcycle? It is not unlikely that young people in Juba engage in all possible ways of money making. Furthermore, it is not only petty criminals but also more serious offenders who run to Juba; thus, they may also contribute to insecurity and crime in this frontier town. Illustrative of this is the experience of Abori, who first went to Juba after being motivated by a Ugandan construction team to join them. Later, the men (whom he referred to as Buganda from central Uganda) absconded to Uganda with the money, and he was the only Ugandan left behind at the construction site and was thus fearful of becoming the target of revenge by police or other security/state actors. Ugandans,

therefore, also contribute to the insecurity that marks the environment of Juba and the roads to it,[345] perpetuating its image as a lawless and dangerous frontier.

Furthermore, as argued, 'small offenders' were relatively easily reabsorbed by their communities in Yumbe after a period of absence. Yet, upon return, some former Juba migrants could also contribute to insecurity back home. The latter was suggested by Helen, when I called her from the Netherlands on 31 December 2013, and it became clear that suddenly she was experiencing her environment as much more unsafe than before, and she related this to the recent outbreak of conflict in south Sudan:

> When I call Helen I ask her if she is going out to celebrate the New Year, but she says: 'Maybe tomorrow when I go for prayers. At night the situation is bad now; you can't believe it! Last night they attempted to break down my door [she was inside]. They did so last Friday as well. Yesterday they managed to break in at my neighbour's home and stole 200,000 Ugandan Shillings.'
> JB: Was she not at home?
> H: She was! [But] they carry arms! These must be our brothers from Sudan.
> JB: Are you suggesting these are Sudanese refugees that fled to Uganda?[346]
> But no, Helen actually suggested that they were criminal boys from the region ('our boys!') who had returned home because of the fighting in Juba and were in desperate need of money. Living on the slightly remote edge of town where it is pitch dark at night, without a husband or other adult man at home, did not really help Helen feel safe. (Notes after a phone conversation, 31 December 2013)

In trying to summarize these observations, it is important to note that although people in Yumbe have officially experienced peace since 2002—due to their need for economic and social survival—they still, out of a certain form of habitus and as a form of refuge, continue to actively engage with terrains that are marked by insecurity. In the process of such specific population movements aimed at extraction and often based on the need to escape, the wider terrain remains insecure, and people's frontier practices potentially contribute to a continuing regional insecurity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter intended to bring to the fore an understanding of the large-scale engagement in cross-border mobility by young men and women from Yumbe. More specifically, I focused on their temporary migrations to the new ROSS after the country voted for secession and became independent from north Sudan on the 9 July 2011. I

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[345] One of my interlocutors, George, travelled back to Yumbe after a few months in Juba, with a new motorcycle. He made the journey together with a Ugandan friend made in Sudan. When George had a major accident, which left him unconscious for a while, the friend was too far away to notice but later found him in a local hospital. George was in shock at the time and unable to speak. His companion told the nurses he was George's brother and got access to all his belongings (telephone, wallet, and motorcycle papers), robbing him of all he had.

[346] Here I was referring to the unfolding conflict in Juba and in the broader region of south Sudan at the time, and the resulting refugee flows entering Uganda.

showed that despite the fact that at the time of my research, the perils involved in travelling and trying to make a living in south Sudan were many, this did not halt the frequent movements of my interlocutors to south Sudan. I explained that one important reason that young people went there, despite the insecurity and sometimes horrific anecdotes of violence, was the fact that they were familiar with the idea that there was always a war taking place somewhere in their surroundings—and, hence, normalization of conflict meant my interlocutors were not particularly hesitant about travelling. They were oriented more towards the chances they expected in Juba (knowing that war and its aftermath come with opportunities for business and work as well), rather than worried about the risks. This can also be explained by the long history of the West Nile region, which has always generated the need to engage in the survival economy and, in particular, the Aringa Muslim experience and orientation towards 'petty trading careers'. Furthermore, in 2011 in the aftermath of the presidential elections, inflation was very high in Uganda, and the meagre economic prospects in rural Yumbe contrasted greatly with those of the newly independent south Sudan, if only for the donor-aid and projects that people expected would generate employment.

Despite these explanations, a closer look into young people's actual engagement in this migration to south Sudan revealed very specific dynamics. Indeed, there was a large group of youngsters aiming to become a 'trader', following the long-standing tradition among the Aringa population, and having a keen eye for opportunity. However, another striking dynamic came to the fore, namely, the many cases in which the need to escape informed the choice to 'run to Juba'. In a large number of cases, this concerned the consequences of what I have come to call 'intimate crises' between young couples. Most often the need to run away arose for boys after they had impregnated their girlfriend or could not live up to their young families' needs. On other occasions, engagement in theft or other transgressions of local social norms or national laws caused people to flee.

In the last part of the chapter, I pondered how we should understand the larger terrain in which young people from Yumbe engage through their migrations. I have argued that they are deeply involved in *frontier practices* that possibly contribute to sustaining insecurity in this frontier region, a region in which Yumbe is also deeply embedded historically. This analysis sheds a gloomy light on the future of this volatile region through the lens of people's continuing struggle for survival.