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Declaration

I, Linda Ekvik, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

Abstract

This research is an empirical study of postwar rural-urban migration among Acholi youth in Northern Uganda. In this thesis I look at the connection between rural land access among Acholi youth and their urban-rural social resettlement after the ceasefire between The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), from the theoretical framework of Everett S. Lee's (1966) push and pull factors in migration. The social resettlement of Acholi youth after the war is seen in the light of their current rural land access.

During my fieldtrip to Northern Uganda I interviewed 13 Acholi youths in rural, semi-urban and urban areas and four expert informants. According to perceptions of informants in this study, the majority of Acholi youth have not resettled in a rural place in spite of their regained rural land access. Hence, there seems to be a weak correlation between youths' rural land access and their rural resettlement. This can be connected to what youth informants of this study perceive to be urban advantages or urban pull factors, like urban educational and economic opportunities, which enable a more diverse lifestyle than found in rural places. Urban and semi-urban environments of displacement during the war can have played a role in enhancing the awareness among Acholi youth of urban advantages.

The study also suggests that postwar rural land access combined with postwar urban youth centralization have created blurred lines between rural and urban Acholi youth. For instance, for youth informants who now have their basic homestead in an urban place, it was not uncommon to be connected to rural land through part time rural agricultural activities. Additionally, many youth was reported to have resettled in rural places after the closure of the IDP camps even though some would prefer urban resettlement. Youth who are settled in urban places can often have parents who have resettled in a rural place. Lastly, several youth informants expressed a feeling of belonging to their rural customary land, as their place of origin, even though they have resettled in an urban place. With the lack of a clear urban/rural distinction between Acholi youth, a wave of increasing tendency to privatize land in Northern Uganda and a changing postwar mentality concerning the meaning of land and wealth, Acholi youth seem to have been put in a limbo between changes of modernity and the status quo of tradition embedded in their rural customary land. This was seen in their ambivalence towards having the interest to sell rural customary land, a desire to own their own private land, their longing for an identity based on their roots and origin and the continuity reflected in their rural customary land.

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| ACORD | - Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development |
| ARLPI | - Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative |
| AVSI | - Association of Volunteers in International Service Foundation |
| GNI | - Gross National Income |
| IDMC | - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre |
| IDP | - Internally Displaced Person |
| LRA | - Lord's Resistance Army |
| PRB | - Population Reference Bureau |
| PRDP | - Peace, Recovery and Development Plan |
| SWAY | - Survey for War Affected Youth |
| UNDP | - United Nations Development Programme |
| UN/DESA | - United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs |
| UNHCR | - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UPDF | - Ugandan People's Defence Force |
| WFP | - World Food Programme |
| YR | - Youth Rural |
| YU | - Youth Urban |

Vocabulary and operationalization of concepts

Ancestral land are words used synonymously with customary, communal land.

Boda boda is a motorcycle taxi, commonly driven by youth and young adults.

Civil war is “defined as an internal conflict in which at least 1,000 battle related deaths (civilian and military) occurred per year.” (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 595). One study showed that 7.8/1000 people died annually from injuries, most typically gun shots between the period from 1995 to 1999 in Northern Uganda. However only 4.5 percent of these were combatants (Lett et al. 2006). From these numbers seen in relation to the definition of civil war it is not clear if it is correct to call the conflict in Northern Uganda a war. In spite of this I choose to call the conflict a civil war and the current situation in Northern Uganda a post war situation because of the immense suffering that civilians have been exposed to as a result of the battles between the UPDF and the LRA (Dolan 2011).

Customary land in this study refers to the land that is obtained according to the Acholi cultural traditional rules of inheritance. This land is not owned privately by one or more individuals. Instead it is collectively owned, and distributed according to clan- and family belonging rather than through monetary purchases (Kligerman 2009: 18). The purpose of this land is to utilize it in harmony with the group’s survival and wellbeing. The customary land is what in the Acholi culture can in a majority of cases be regarded as the “place of origin” (Lee 1966). The customary land of the Acholi can be situated in urban areas, but is commonly placed in rural areas in Northern Uganda.

One of my experts, Mrs. Rosalba suggested to replace the term “ancestral land” with the term “customary land” when referring to the land inherited from past descendants. This is to remind people about the collectivistic idea behind the delegation of plots of land among the Acholi. Even though the term “ancestral land” has been mostly used in the interviews, in this thesis I will use the term “customary land”.

Elder is a mature person, man or woman, but commonly a man, who has shown a remarkable sense of judgment and leadership skills, often obtained from living a long life which has given the person time to acquire life wisdom.

Land “Land” can have many definitions¹. In my study I use the term as a plot of ground or soil, most often being used for agriculture and establishment of households.

Land accessibility in this study refers to the possibility that Acholi youth have to enter rural, customary land for productive utilization, creation of a homestead, establishment of a household and the exercise of social, cultural and traditional practices according to social perceptions, norms and values².

Mzee is the title of an old man who is being recognized.

Place of destination in this study refers to a place away from the rural customary land where youth have chosen to resettle. In the context of the Northern Uganda postwar era “the place of destination” is commonly in urban or semi-urban areas. Most Acholi youth during the last three decades moved from rural areas to Gulu town, or to semi-urban IDP camps which later developed into urban trading centers (Whyte et al. 2014).

Place of origin in this thesis refers to rural customary land, but at certain occasions the place of origin of my study population is also situated in the urban space. Customary land correlates to the term “place of origin” with regards to the way this plot of land ties Acholi people to their ancestors and Acholi youths’ feeling of belonging to this type of land (Kligerman 2009: 26-27).

Privileged youth in this thesis refers to a youth who have a father, other family members and/or any other actor who can afford to fund his or her education at university level and at the same time cover the youth’s basic physiological needs.

Resettlement strategy in this study refers to the Acholi youths’ perceptions about which place of resettlement is bringing most social, cultural and economic benefits.

Rural is a word used to characterize a place with features related to farming and agriculture³. In this study the term refers to village areas around urban and semi-urban centers.

Rwot is a title used among the Acholi on a cultural leader who is a leader figure of the clan or tribe. He is seen as a king. The one among his sons who have shown the greatest sense of responsibility and wisdom will be offered to take over the throne after the king. There are several

¹ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/land> [22.10.2015]

² <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/access> [22.10.2015]

³ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/rural> [18.01.2016]

rwodi (rwots) among the Acholi. The paramount rwot of the Acholi people is called David Onen Achana II.

Semi-urban is a word used to characterize a place with features that are both related to a city or town and a rural place. In this thesis the term refers to the IDP camps and places with proximity to town.

Primary and senior secondary school are terms used in Uganda to classify levels of education before university level. Primary school is seven years. Senior secondary school consists of ordinary level (O-level) which is four years. From this pupils reach advanced level (A-level) which is two years. To attend university senior six, the last year of advanced level, must be completed successfully.

Social resettlement in my research refers to the movement of Acholi youth from one place to another after the UPDF-LRA war sparked migratory waves throughout its population. The Free Dictionary defines “resettlement” as “the act or instance of settling or being settled in another place”⁴. When I add “social” to the term, it describes a situation where a whole group of people have had to resettle. I do not use the term “resettlement” in the same way as Fiddian-Quasmiyeh et al. (2014) whose definition refers to transnational migration. This thesis addresses migration inside national borders.

Urban is a word used to characterize a place which has features related to a city or town⁵. In this thesis the term is used to describe towns, cities and village trading centers.

⁴ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/resettlement> [22.10.2015]

⁵ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/urban> [18.01.2016]

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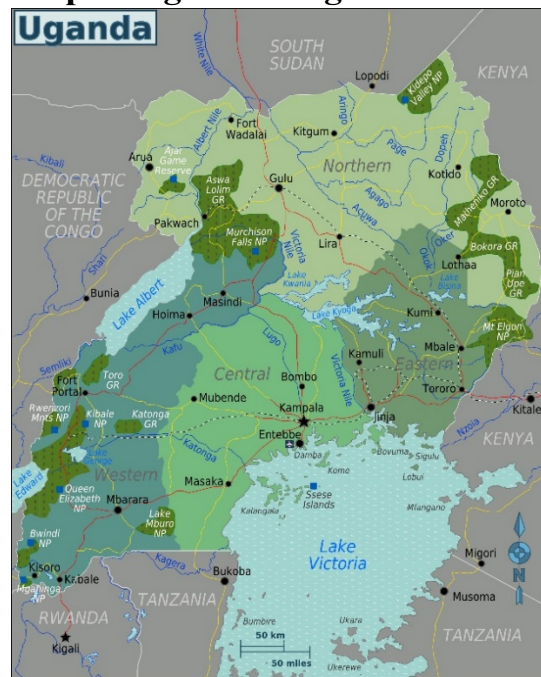
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Map of Ugandan districts



Map of Ugandan regions



Both maps accessed at: <http://www.vidiani.com>

Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic of the paper and contains background information to further prepare the reader for its following content. Chapter two introduces the problem statement, research question and objectives behind the study. Furthermore, chapter three gives a look into other academic literature written on the same subject, my ontological standpoint and the theoretical tools used to analyze the findings of the research. Chapter four brings methodological clarifications, while chapter five analyzes findings and presents the main conclusions of the study.

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

The urban environment requires high skilled workers (Lucas 2004: 32). One common postwar effect though, is to leave big amounts of young people unskilled. A report shows that this is the case among war-affected Acholi youth in Northern Uganda (International Alert 2013). During the UPDF-LRA war former rurally based Acholi youth sought refuge in urban towns and semi-urban internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps. As a result, large rural areas of fertile land for farming were abandoned. In the current postwar Northern Uganda, a return to rural customary land has the potential to save youth from the same suffering and starvation that they had to face during camp life. Has this brought Acholi youth to resettle rurally now that people have yet again regained rural land access?

Based on interviews with thirteen youth and four experts, this thesis aims to uncover the connection between regained rural land access among Acholi youth and their postwar urban/rural social resettlement in order to enhance understanding around their current living situations and preferences. The paper takes a closer look at socio-economic conditions that Acholi youth in Northern Uganda experience a decade after the ceasefire between the UPDF and the LRA. The thesis seeks to explain how a number of factors have influenced Acholi youth to resettle either in urban or rural places. Everett S. Lee's (1966) push and pull factors in migration will be used as a theoretical framework for the analysis.

1.2 General country information: Uganda

Uganda is an East African republic which was independent from British colonialists in 1962 (Mwakikagile 2012: 10). Since then the country has been affected by war and political turmoil which is often related to competing interests in the country's large amount of natural resources (Blattman 2009: 232, Alstine et al. 2014, Finnström 2001, 2008: 71-74, Oleke et al. 2005: 2630-2631, Mabikke 2011).

Uganda's economy has grown significantly during the last decade as well as its middle class (The Economist 2015). Still, the Human Development Report of 2015 states that Uganda is the

25th least developed country in the world with regards to human development (UNDP 2015). Its population has grown drastically during the last two decades and has now reached 39 million (UN/DESA 2015: 17). While the median age of the world population was 29,6 years in 2015, it was 15, 9 in Uganda (Ibid: 33, 36). 82 percent of Uganda's labor force is in agriculture (IndexMundi 2015).

1.3 Contextual background

There are several ethnic groups in Northern Uganda. The Acholi people belongs to the Luo ethnic group. The group is mainly based in the districts of Gulu and Amuru, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Nwoya and Agago in Northern Uganda, also called Acholiland (Walusimbi 2012: xiv). The center of the Acholi tribe is in Gulu district. The rural areas around this town were most affected by the war. The Acholi people are agrarian people. For centuries they have relied on animal raring and cultivation of food crops as their means of subsistence. Their culture, tradition, social norms and values are built around having access to land for agricultural practice (McElroy et al. 2011: 200, Annan et al. 2006: 3). From the mid 1980's to the mid-2000 a violent conflict prevented the Acholi people from accessing this rural land that they used for cultivation. This land mostly belongs to the category of customary land which is inherited from generation to generation. An expert informant in my sample, Rwot Yusuf Adek of Pageya, informed that the Acholi people call the land which is being used for agriculture, in the name of a woman in the family. Traditionally men dig and women clean and harvest in the garden. The hunting ground is a ground of forest. Cutting down trees in the forest to make fields for animal raring or cultivation is not allowed, according to Acholi customs. Around 90 percent of land in sub-Saharan Africa is under this indigenious land tenure system (Amone and Lakwo 2014: 117).

The civil war which prevented Acholi people from accessing their rural land was fought between the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (the Ugandan national army) and the rebel group, The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The extreme brutality committed by the fighting parties has often worked as a curtain covering up a national, inter-ethnic power struggle between Bantu-speaking southerners and Nilotic-speaking northerners (Ogwang 2015: 157-159). At its highest intensity the war displaced over 90 percent of the Acholi people into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps (Pham and Vinck 2010: 24). 1.84 million people fled to 251 IDP camps in 11

Northern Ugandan districts (Whyte et al. 2014: 601). A minor portion of the displaced people sought refuge in and around Gulu municipality (Ibid., Branch 2013).

The IDP camp environment is described to be an urban/semi-urban environment (Whyte et al. 2014). The living conditions in the camps were very poor (Finnström 2008). At most 1000 people died in the camp per week (Ugandan Ministry of Health et al. 2005), much due to being isolated by restrictions to move outside the camp, insecurity around the camps and high risks related to food aid delivery by the World Food Programme (WFP) and other NGO's. This created a "prison economy", forcing the refugees to live on minimum subsistence (Bjørkhaug and Bøås 2014: 187-205). Land for cultivation was scarce in an around the camp borders as people were packed inside small grass-thatched houses, that from the air looked like natural habitats of mushrooms clustered together. Many camp residents died of sexually transmittable diseases and sicknesses related to alcoholism, drug abuse and malnutrition (Whyte et al. 2014: 603-604). Seen in retrospect, it is likely that the huge suffering among IDP settlers could have been diminished by the Ugandan authorities in co-operation with the international community if they had done more to ensure the wellbeing of the displaced people (Dolan 2011, McElroy et al. 2011: 198-200).

As a ceasefire took place in 2006 (O'Reilly 2015: 205) many people were still not sure of their level of security in case of return to their rural places of origin or "to where the war found them" (Whyte et al. 2014: 605). Five years after the ceasefire most people had left the IDP camps to rebuild their lives as independent farmers (O'Reilly 2015: 203). However, two decades of displacement had now seriously disrupted the returnees' rural livelihood base.

The large number of deaths during IDP displacement changed the IDP population composition. In the end of the IDP camp era there was a bigger part of the population who were young people than in the beginning (Bjørkhaug et al. 2007: 11-12). One of the challenges that many faced when leaving the place of displacement was regaining access to the rural land that they or their families had been chased from. Annan et al. (2006) found that at the end of the war only 27 percent of Northern Ugandan youth said that they had access to land for cultivation. At that time the youth had to often rent or borrow land for cultivation. The size of the land was small, normally just one or two acres (p. 37). This is a strong reduction of land access compared to the time before the rural majority was forced to flee to local IDP camps (Mukwaya et al 2011: 7).

The rural land that these youth are entitled to are usually part of a customary land tenure system. Before the displacement of the Acholi people they used to live in extended families in a patrilineal system (Kligerman 2009: 18). In this system primary kinship connections and inheritance go through the father. Land rights are for instance inherited from fathers to sons. If the father is dead or not present the paternal uncle shares a greater responsibility for his nephew than the maternal uncle of the same person (Peoples and Bailey 2014: 221-223). Traditionally the men stay in their parents' compound throughout their lives, while the women move to their husband's customary land and his extended, biological family. The Acholi people is organized in a patriarchal, gerontocratic and hierarchal social system. Male elders in the family have the authority to delegate land to the younger generations. If a woman divorces her husband she can go back to her father's land where she will be given plot to keep her children. This land will commonly include a part intended for cultivation.

The Ugandan Land Act of 1998 recognizes the customary land tenure system, but the current government often describes this system of communal land ownership as a system opposing development and rather advocates for more privatization of land. The customary land tenure system from which a person acquires land ownership irrespective of his financial strength, is commonly seen as a system more favorable to poor people than the system of land privatization (Amone and Lakwo 2014: 117-118).

In the wake of this, one of the biggest challenges that the impoverished Acholi people are currently facing is land grabbing. Powerful Ugandan politicians join hands with foreign and national investors and the political elite to buy big areas of rural land, because these investors have the means to enhance the efficiency of agricultural production. The cultural, social and environmental costs of the grabbing land from civilians are down-prioritized in these cases (McMichael 2012: 693). Land commoditization deprives the authority embedded in land ownership (Marx 1938). There is a growing grievance among people about the union between the local elite and the national leaders who grabs land and resources from an already impoverished population, rather than enhancing efforts to rebuild and revive Northern Uganda. The land grabbing practice can threaten future stability in Northern Uganda, as land is the only natural resource people have left after the war (Kligerman 2009: 29, Amone and Lakwo 2014: 118). . At the same time there is a number of postwar effects causing confusion on a local level

around who among neighbours and family members are truly entitled to rural customary land now that they are no longer forbidden from accessing this land. These postwar effects will be discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

Another challenge facing the whole of Uganda today is population growth. The fertility rate in Northern Uganda is one of the highest in the country with 6.3 births per woman in a lifetime (Chi et al. 2015: 2). In addition, Uganda receives large numbers of asylum seekers every year. Northern Uganda has currently received 125 000 Southern Sudanese refugees (UNHCR 2015). In 2015 there were at a moment 385 500 refugees and 35 500 asylum seekers present in Uganda (Darby 2015: 9). Even though “armed conflicts are associated with higher total fertility” (Chi et al. 2015: 2) population growth is not only reserved for the war-affected Northern region of Uganda. Population growth is a common phenomenon in the whole of Uganda, and in Sub-Saharan Africa in general (PRB 2013: 6). From 1991 to 2010 Uganda experienced a population growth of 15.9 million people. The population number doubled during these two decades. The Ugandan average population growth rate is currently 3.3 percent every year (Hassler 2015: 21). In my study claims were made that population growth reduces rural land access among Acholi youth (see 2.2.5).

Chapter 2: Problem statement and research objectives

2.1 Problem statement

In the agrarian Northern Ugandan society having access to rural land has traditionally been essential for people’s socio-economic wellbeing and cultural identity. What happens when 1.8 million people, making up a strong majority of the Acholi people, are uprooted and displaced from the rural land that forms the foundation for their way of living (IDMC 2010: 3)?

In this thesis I ask how changes in rural land accessibility in Northern Uganda affect rural/urban resettlement among Acholi youth, and which other factors that can play a role for resettlement among Acholi youth. How can youths’ perceptions about rural and urban advantages and disadvantages explain their choice to resettle in a rural or urban place?

2.2 Research objectives

With this research I produce a contribution to the research on the Northern Ugandan postwar situation. Not much has been written about resettlement among youth in a postwar setting in Northern Uganda. With my research I wish to add knowledge to the already existing academic literature on this topic (see chapter three). When bullets have stopped flying in bushes, the focus on war-affected areas tends to be taken off media headlines. As unavoidable as this may be, research has the potential to enhance attention to and knowledge about fragile postwar societies. This can inform national and international efforts to maintain peace and stability in the war-affected region and prevent relapse into violent conflict and war.

It is crucial for any actor, who wishes to participate in the social, cultural and economic revival of a war-affected area, to understand youth actions and thoughts because they shape the future of the society. These actions and thoughts work as indicators of fundamental values that the society is built on. To obtain knowledge about youths' perceptions is crucial in the maintenance of social and political stability. The lack of opportunity to build a strong cultural identity, obtain socio-economic opportunities and have a feeling of predictability can cause uncertainty among youth. This can spark violence and instability (Berger and Weber 2011: 119). Working for a peaceful, stable and healthy Northern Uganda depends on knowing what to deal with and where to make an effort. Moving beyond media headlines and acquiring knowledge about the "inner world" of youth can be a valuable contribution in this respect. By this, I hope to bring a deeper understanding of Acholi youth and their society in a time of transition, in the space between change and the preservation of status quo.

2.3 Research question

My research question is the following:

1. How can rural-urban social resettlement among Acholi youth be explained in the light of current postwar changes in rural land accessibility among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda?

Rural land access is a dynamic phenomenon, constantly changing due to various factors. In this study it is not possible to confirm the extent of rural land access among Acholi youth. However,

previous studies show that there has been an increase in rural land access among the Acholi people in general after the ceasefire in 2006 (IDMC 2011, AVSI 2010). To uncover the answer to the question about the extent of rural land access among Acholi youth today, larger resources and different research methods must be taken into use. However, what I have done in this paper is to explore Acholi youths' perspective and perceptions on rural land access. These perceptions are valuable, because they work as indicators of the current socio-economic situation among Acholi youth. They can also spark new questions and dig deeper into the space in which Acholi youth exist.

In this thesis I look at the extent of which rural land access has affected their urban/rural resettlement and strategy to obtain a livelihood. In addition, I look for other important factors affecting Acholi youths' perceptions on where to resettle. I search to find out whether or not these factors have a particular compelling character or if they are mainly driven by the youths' own voluntariness and preferences. The latter point derives from curiosity being sparked when reading Adam Branch's (2013) article, about destitute urban Acholi youth in Gulu town who he claimed have no access to land and is therefore compelled to adapt to urban life in spite of lacking the means to do this in a manner that preserves the youths' wellbeing.

Chapter 3: Literature review and theoretical framework

3.1 Literature review

In order to strengthen the reliability and validity of this study secondary data is needed to support the primary data. As well as supporting the primary data the secondary data can supplement the research areas of the topic that has not been covered well (Ross and Matthews 2010: 289). In this section I will put my research findings in relation to existing literature on my topic.

Postwar resettlement in Northern Uganda have been looked at from a macro perspective, for instance by Joireman et al. (2012). By the title "A different way home: Resettlement patterns in Northern Uganda" the researchers look at social resettlement using data from "maps and satellite imagery" (p. 1) to observe the "clustering of home placement in the post-conflict period" (ibid.) as a method to uncover the changes in the resettlement pattern in Northern Uganda before, during and after the war, from the years of 1969, 2003 and 2010 (p. 5).

The study found that “civil conflict did change the settlement patterns of internally displaced people” (p. 6) in Northern Uganda when comparing the settlement pattern during and after the war. In addition, “people are living closer together than previously” (ibid.). The authors indicated that livelihood choices change as a result of having been displaced. This is likely to be connected to “people finding new economic opportunities” (Ibid.) and the need for security. My findings support the claim that new economic opportunities in urban places drive youth to cluster in urban centers. However, the need for security was not emphasized much by the informants in my study. Joireman et al. found that in Palaro, where violence had lasted for a longer period of time, people tended to live more clustered and closer to the main road than in Apala where there had been less violence for a shorter period of time, and where the settlement pattern after the conflict was more similar to the one before the conflict (Ibid.). Again this finding confirms my finding that effects of war have made Acholi youth aware of urban advantages which have clustered them together in urban centers.

The authors in this study pronounced that they are not able to claim any cause for this settlement pattern. As in my study, resettlement pattern during and after the war in Northern Uganda is studied by Joireman et al. However they did not focus on the role that land accessibility has played after the war for the changes in social resettlement.

Another study conducted by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council looks into “durable solutions to internal displacement” in the context of Northern Uganda (IDMC 2011: 7). The study informed that a strong majority of the people in the IDP camps in Northern Uganda chose to resettle back into their villages after the closure of the camps (p. 129-130, 137).

Culturally, land is very important to the Acholi people, and the ties to ancestral land are very strong. This sentiment pervaded all stakeholder interviews conducted for this study; even people in major towns and with good jobs often keep a foothold on the traditional lands by constructing a hut and cultivating their land. For many who were displaced the pull of culture is strong, and to abandon the clan and the ancestors would be unthinkable. Even for some of the young people who had grown up mostly (if not entirely) in the camps, having land and links to ancestry remains important. Even if they preferred to stay in the camps for school or other services, many strongly note the economic importance of having land that can be cultivated (Ibid.).

Traditionally and practically (because of economics and clan land holdings), the only land people can generally occupy is the homeland that belongs to their clans, although the concept of private land is beginning to emerge (p. 136).

My study indicates that these findings discovered by the IDMC cannot only be transferred to the Acholi people in general, but to Acholi youth in particular. In the study, worries are posed about the future of some of these youth who choose to remain in urban and semi-urban areas and thus live separately from their parents who are not given the chance to care for the youth to the extent that the youth may need. The study informed that youth mentioned lack of good services and functioning infrastructure in the rural areas to explain their choice of settlement (p. 144). Youths' choice to live in urban areas even though their parents have resettled rurally, and the lack of good services in rural areas, my informants also mentioned.

Adam Branch published in 2013 a paper on the Northern Ugandan people who lived as displaced in Gulu town when the camps closed. He wrote that:

...displacement and internment have produced fractures within Acholi society that are leading to the systematic dispossession of land, with the result that a new landless population is emerging for whom moving to Gulu [town] is their last resort (p. 3157).

Branch further explained Northern Uganda as a socially and culturally fragmented system of authority as a result of war, where the previously authoritative elders have now lost their power to the youth as a growing monetary system of economic opportunities caught up several of the youth and made them enjoy more freedom when sheltered from the patriarchal authority of the elders (p. 3157-3159). The youth got the taste of the “modern, global consumer culture” (p. 3159).

It is not surprising, then, that many youth and women were ambivalent about returning to the village from the town, especially if it were on the same patriarchal terms as before displacement. Many expressed their desire to build a second home in the village so as to have one foot there and one in town (Ibid.).

Branch describes the lack of land access among civilians and the former LRA rebel returnees as victims of the subjugation by local, national and political male elite through land grabbing (p. 3161-3163). He claimed that the former displaced population from the time of war has now been exchanged with another group who are currently in town due to “exclusion from access to land for farming” (p. 3160). He continues:

...it appears that many of the wartime displaced have moved out of Gulu (Dunovant, 2011, p. 40) and have been replaced by a new internally displaced population—those who have been forced to move to town not because of civil war and government policy, but because of their exclusion from access to land for farming. This new group, which cannot or will not return to the village, is changing Gulu's social composition, as what had been a cross-section of the Acholi peasantry is being replaced by a larger proportion of marginalised and excluded. With the former camps no longer viable places to live, Gulu, it appears, is becoming the principal refuge for an anomic, frustrated and economically and socially desperate population (Ibid.).

Most of my findings support Branch's findings. His statements in this latter quote, though, did not fully correlate with my data. During my interviews with both rural and urban youth, they gave me the impression that there are many advantages associated with urban life which often pull them to urban places. Branch, however, gives by his writings the impression that rather than people willingly settling in an urban place or having the wish to live urbanely, they were dominantly pushed to do so due to rural disadvantages. To the contrary, all the youth informants, except YR10, gave me the impression that even if rural life could have worked out well for them, they prefer living in an urban place due to its pull factors, which was commonly mentioned to be more economic opportunities and quality education for themselves and their children. From this I have come to understand that the image reflected by Branch of the situation around urban youth resettlement in Gulu town may not correlate perfectly with the perceptions among all urban Acholi youth.

Additionally, Branch gives the impression that a large segment of urban youth inhabitants lack rural land access. All my expert informants claimed the opposite; that a majority of youth who have settled in an urban place, have access to rural land, one way or another. Branch published his article in 2013. I collected my data two years later. I doubt that rural land access among urban Acholi youth have changed drastically during these two years, even though some more youth in 2015 than in 2013 can have acquired access to rural land. Again, more and bigger research projects are needed to clarify rural land access among Acholi youth.

Etienne Salborn has written a bachelor thesis titled "Prerequisites of return and reintergration for long term displaced persons in Northern Uganda" (2010a). He looks at obstacles for return into rural areas without seeing this in relation to land access in particular. Some of the obstacles against return to the rural, customary land are the lack of housing and assistance, not knowing

the boundaries of the customary land, land disputes, land mines and the effect of trauma. He hereby touches upon land accessibility. Compared to Salborn's study, in my study five years later a smaller emphasis was put on land mines and effects of trauma when explaining obstacles to rural return.

In the beginning of 2010 the Italian organization the Association of Volunteers in International Service Foundation (AVSI) published the report "A Time Between. Moving on from internal displacement in northern Uganda". The report stated that:

As of today, this large displaced population is taking advantage of the new freedom, moving steadily outside the camps toward the areas of their origin. This return pattern is challenged however by the lack of services in the return areas, the difficulties in accessing several sites, the lack of governance at parish level, and by the incapacity of a coordinated approach at parish level by the humanitarian actors (p. 7).

The report has a particular focus on vulnerable people and gives little information about the rural land access of the returnees, but mentioned urban pull factors when explaining urban youth centralization. As in my study, the mentioning of both urban push and pull factors is done here to explain the flocking of youth to town.

Prolonged displacement has inevitably affected Acholi culture. Many youth, for example, may forsake the rural, agricultural way of life and instead seek more familiar opportunities in towns. Many returnees have elected to move to return sites in which they are near their land, but not completely back to the solitude of their village (p. 14).

In 2006 The Survey for War Affected Youth (SWAY) data was collected from 1000 households in Northern Uganda. The survey looks at many factors affecting youth in the context of war, but to my research the more relevant part of the survey is the part concerning the youth's socio-economic opportunities. Concerning land access among youth at the brink of the ceasefire this was stated: "Few youth have access to land, and the principal form of economic activity are *leje leje*, essential casual labour and small projects" (Annan et al. 2006: 37).

Just 27 percent of the youth say they have access to any land for cultivation of crops, and for most of these the amount is quite small – typically just one or two acres. In two-thirds of the cases, this land is borrowed or rented. Those who access land do so primarily through kin networks and neighbours (Ibid.).

If my expert informants' perceptions of Acholi youths' rural land access is correct, SWAY's finding informs that there has been a drastic increase in rural land access among Acholi youth during from 2006 to 2015.

Other studies touching upon the same topic have been conducted from other study sites than Northern Uganda. This is for instance seen in "Land Access and the Return and Resettlement of IDPs and Refugees in Burundi" (2005) by Kamungi et al. This book chapter describes how displacement among Burundians has limited their land access, and brings focus to the need for government interventions in a resettlement situation with reduced land access among the rural poor, since land conflict easily triggers societal instability. A fear of lack of compensational urban livelihood opportunities in the absence of rural land utilization among Acholi youth, have in similarity with the research of Kamungi et al. been touched upon in my thesis.

Elhawary and Pantuliano have written a chapter in "Land and Post-conflict Peacebuilding" (2013) about how land issues affect the willingness among displaced to return to their previous home areas and the likelihood of restoring a lasting peace (p. 115-120). The authors do not see this topic from a particular geographical area, but look at it from the perspective of several empirical examples, like Timor-Leste, Colombia, Darfur region of Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Afghanistan.

Researchers from my own university, Stein T. Holden and Sosina Bezu, have studied "Land Access and Youth Livelihood Opportunities in Southern Ethiopia" (2013). The study shows how state effort to prevent youth from having access to land for agriculture have resulted in the youth turning "their back on agriculture" (p. 2) as means of livelihood. This has led to increasing urban migration among youth.

3.2 Theoretical framework

3.2.1 The social constructivist ontological perspective

"Whether something qualifies as real does not depend on whether it exists, but on whether humans treat it as important" (Frueh 2003: 10). This sentence sums up the social constructivist perspective that I use as the ontological foundation for my research. In other words, this is how I "understand the nature of reality" (Shkedi 2005: 3) when gathering and analyzing social science

data. The social constructivist perspective utters the need to view social scientific phenomena as defined by human beings through their perceptions of the material world. It is hence information about the human understanding of the world that can be registered and written down when conducting social science. This is in discordance with the positivist idea that social science phenomena can be measured in the same way as natural phenomena in accordance to natural law (Frueh 2005: 10, Shkedi 2005: 3). The value of a thousand dollar note is actually not worth more than some few cents, if the value of the note had not been given its socially defined meaning as something more valuable than only a piece of paper. This example illustrates the core of social constructivist thinking.

Implicitly, this does not mean that the social constructivist perspective denies material existence. The approach rather emphasizes the meanings that human beings give to the material world than the material world in itself. In the interplay between the creation and reproduction of these meanings and values, human society is best understood when analyzing its dynamics. Human action is based on their understanding of the world. This understanding develops in the interaction between the individual and his group, because human being is inherently a social being (Frueh 2003: 10-11). Now the question posed is how can social science be seen as science when there is no way of researching on its objective reality? The answer is that it is possible to research on the way reality is being perceived, and this is where the important information lies since all social knowledge stems from the human mind (Berg and Lune 2012: 3-4).

In my thesis I look at how human perceptions of the best place to settle correspond to their settlement outcome in a socio-economic context. I found for instance that the decision to settle in an urban place was among most urban youth informants made from the perception that this was the place of settlement that would enhance their chance of a socio-economically secure future. Even youth informants with small family network in town and no higher education carried this perception. Ideas surrounding advantages of urban life work as important driving factors when Acholi youth choose to settle in urban places. However, throughout my thesis I will show how the choice to settle urbanely may not be the socio-economically wisest choice for all youth in this area. Their perceptions of advantages and disadvantages of their place of origin (rural customary land) and their place of destination (Gulu town and urban village trading centers) are

nevertheless what eventually bring them to a decision on where to settle, and not necessarily the factual most advantageous choice.

3.2.2 Lee's theory of push and pull – "A Theory of Migration" (1966)

The theoretical framework for this research is mainly based on Everett S. Lee's "Theory of Migration" (1966) where he presents his ideas about what drives a person to migrate. Lee defines migration as "permanent or semi-permanent change of residence" (p. 49). When speaking of "residence" he refers to "long-term residence" (Ibid.). "...every act of migration involves an origin, and an intervening set of obstacles", he continues (Ibid.). Lee sees that factors associated with the place of origin, the place of destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors must be examined when one is to explain why someone has chosen to migrate (p. 50, 55-56). He claims that there are advantages that drive someone to resettle in another place. He calls these factors pull-factors. There are also disadvantages of the place of origin that pushes a person to migrate to another place. He calls these factors push-factors. These push – and pull-factors may be disturbed by intervening obstacles, like the distance of the move and the lack of transport opportunities on this travel. The media coverage of the current Syrian refugee crisis describes intervening obstacles daily when reporting about closed Balkan state borders (Al Jazeera and agencies 2015).

Lee's theory brings interesting and analytical perspectives to my research as I am looking at which factors push and which pull Acholi youth to resettle in rural and urban areas, and the role that their rural land access or lack of rural land access plays in this. In addition I touch upon an intervening obstacle standing in their way to move between rural and urban areas. Lee's theory will hence be used as a tool to answer the research question in this study. The same has been done in the work of Kamungi et al. (2005) in "Land Access and the Return and Resettlement of IDPs and Refugees in Burundi". In this research the authors see postwar resettlement challenges in Burundi in the theoretical framework of push and pull factors (p. 219).

Lee explains the diversity of factors which underlie migratory movements in his article. Even though the act of migration cannot always be seen as a rational choice, it is common that the persons who migrate follow through with this act after evaluating positive and negative aspects of the place and origin, and likewise of the place of destination (p. 51, 53). Migration often

depends on the migrants' perceptions of conditions in the two places, rather than the actual situation on ground. The importance of perception rather than the actual situation on ground is for instance seen currently among many economic migrants from African countries who before reaching the wealthier European countries, obtain unrealistically high expectations about their chances to succeed financially in Europe (Gerdes 2007: 2). Still, the perception of an easy road to success in Europe is a force driving migrants to follow through with what is often life threatening journeys of migration. This underpins the social constructivist perspective used in this thesis, which proclaims the importance of human perceptions when trying to understand social scientific issues.

Lee makes the reader aware of the fact that there is no either-or between the place of origin and the place of destination. In fact, what often happens is that migration creates a bond between the two places. The place of destination can strengthen the migrant and enable him to return to the place of origin with more resources than what he had when he left (Lee 1966: 55). Through this, natural resources, for instance, can be utilized in a more profitable manner when returning to the place of origin. He also states that migrants tend to settle where they see that there are economic opportunities. During times of economic expansion migrants tend to flock to these places. Oppositely, during times of depression and economic downfalls, migrants tend to go to where they feel safer, which commonly is the place of origin (Ibid.: p. 56). This informs that migrants are selective.

This theoretical framework was chosen in this study because it structured the analysis of the findings in a manner that enabled easier navigation through the collected data material. The structured navigation contributed to an overview of the content which more easily led to an overall conclusion. In line with the purpose of this study, the theory of push and pull factors in migration works as a tool to uncover how resettlement preferences among urban and rural Acholi youth after changes in rural land access among the Acholi people, have contributed to the youths' current socio-geographic composition. This is done by systematizing different factors which seem to have influenced Acholi youths' resettlement preferences.

Chapter 4: Methodology

There is no valid and reliable research without its production tools and rules. In the following chapter I will explain my choice of research method, its strategy and design.

4.1 Research strategy: Qualitative method approach

The research method in this study was chosen based on this fundamental question: How can the research question be answered the best way possible in relation to the resources and time available? I hence choose qualitative method in my research, conducting mainly qualitative semi-standardized one-to-one interviews. The decision to use this method was rooted in the aim to uncover perceptions, understandings, hopes and ideas in the minds of my informants. The aim of the qualitative interviews was to provide interactions between the subject and the researcher that is necessary in order to understand the research question. My interest when entering this task of conducting qualitative interviews is to find in-depth information instead of quantitative findings (Berg and Lune 2012: 8, 112-14, Vermeij 2014: 55).

Even though each informant's life story is exceptional I find the life history approach to fulfill the purpose of my research, which is to uncover how the youth perceive their life and reality (Sosulski et al. 2010: 29-30). The life history approach uses the informant's subjective narrative of his or her personal life to get answers to the subject's perceptions of the social world. The data collected from this approach will thereafter be used in the analysis of certain social phenomena, in my case to shed light over perceptions of the connection between postwar rural land access and social resettlement among youth. The life history approach enables me to draw lines between the past and the present in the search for a comprehensive understanding of the social and historical space that my subjects perceive themselves to be in (Bakar and Abdullah 2008).

4.2 Research design

Research design refers to "the structure of research – it is the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together" (Trochim 2006). The purpose of the research design is to enable the researchers to describe, explain and explore the social phenomena in question (Matthews and Ross 2010). The research question in this study satisfies these three criteria. Questions deriving from the research question are: How and why is today's rural land access among youth the way it is? How and why have the youth chosen to resettle where they have resettled? How is their place of resettlement related to the rural land access of the youth?

In this study I want to provide a micro perspective as level of analysis. A macro level describing current rural land access among youth has been hard to find in the secondary literature. The macro-level estimates given by the expert informants in this study about Acholi youths' rural land access and the shares of youth resettled in rural and urban places need to be tested through more research because they are based on their perceptions of the situation, only. Still, these estimates act as indicators that should not be ignored since these experts are expected to have an overview of changes in their society.

Epistemologically the study is mainly empirically based. It deduces from the general to the specific in the sense that I went to the field with a hypothesis that derived from my readings about the postwar situation in Northern Uganda (Bryman 2012: 27). My working hypothesis sounded like this: "Land accessibility is a crucial factor when trying to explain urban-rural resettlement of Acholi youth after the LRA-UPDF war".

4.3 The role of the research assistant

The time period spent on the fieldwork was three weeks. These three weeks was mostly spent collecting data by conducting interviews and observation of local life in suburban Gulu where I lived. I was greatly helped by my local research assistant I hired for this fieldwork because it enabled me participation in his network and to learn from his experience through his sixty years of living in Gulu. This enabled me to conduct the research in the small time frame of three weeks. The time saved was also much due to tight communication between me and the research assistant before the trip and the preparation made on ground by the research assistant before my arrival.

The research assistant was discovered because of his connections to some personal acquaintances of mine in Norway. Through social media communication we established a relationship of trust which was crucial for this project to develop smoothly. His capacity to move us around on his motorcycle was useful and enhanced the effectiveness during the fieldwork. Even though there is no violent conflict in Northern Uganda at the moment, there have been waves of violence among civilians, for instance the attacks on boda boda riders in September/October 2014. The research assistant strengthened my safety with his experience of adapting to conditions in the study site. He also functioned as a translator, a cultural translator and as the coordinator of the different

trips and interviews. This was particularly valuable when the first interview was to be conducted with the chief of Pageya in Gulu Municipality, because there were norms of conduct that the research assistant taught me before the interview with the chief.

4.4 Sampling

In this research the study population is the Acholi youth. The research assistant was given the task to provide the samples and coordinate the interviews in this research, because of his physical presence and social connections in the study site.

I chose Northern Uganda as a study area because I have for long had the interest to learn more about this society and culture. The initial fascination derived from the teaching I got by friends and family about the LRA-UPDF war and the suffering of the Acholi people. They have shared their stories with me and it sparked a curiosity to learn more. The painful, and often not so much talked about, torture that the people of Northern Uganda has gone through added to my interest to bring more focus onto the northern region of Uganda.

The sample from this population was selected from Gulu town, Bungatira subcounty in Gulu district and Pabbo trading center in Amuru district. The project was mainly based in these three different study sites. I started the fieldwork thinking that Bungatira and Pabbo are where we would find informants representing the rural environment and that Gulu town represented the urban. I chose to conduct the research in Gulu town because Gulu is seen as the “local capital” of the region. It was the town most affected by the war (Bøås and Hatleøy 2005, Branch 2013). In this town my research assistant had the social network that I needed to get connected to the informants. However, it was an explorative fieldwork that enabled me to look into areas I had not necessarily planned to visit in the planning phase of the fieldwork. For instance, Pabbo IDP camp with about 75 000 residents at its peak (Musalizi et al. 2011: 5), has now developed into an urban trading center. It was therefore not a purely rural place anymore, and I started including village trading centers as an urban category. Bungatira village was chosen because it satisfies the criteria of a rural place in Gulu district, dominated by farming as a means of livelihood for its local population. Hence the three areas represent urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

After returning home from the fieldwork I realized that in a future research project I would prefer to study the urban youth population who have the least education. These youth were accused of laziness and cultural deprivation by almost all the informants in my study, but youth of this category did not get the chance to answer these accusations sufficiently in my study because they were only two of the thirteen youth informants. Thus, to which extent we successfully managed to select a group of respondents with varied characteristics, can be discussed. The personal experiences of the youth informants were clearly more optimistic than the negative image they reflected of many other Acholi youth. For instance, all youth informants, except YU4, perceived their rural land access and customary land as crucial in their lives, but claimed that there are a large number of Acholi youth today who are willing to sell their rural customary land in exchange of “easy life” in town.

During the fieldwork I conducted one focus group interview with three rural youth. Focus group interviews can provide the research with adequate and interesting information on certain issues, like confirming the perception of the collective identity and ruling group mentality. More importantly, due to the sharing of ideas the group interaction in a focus group can bring ideas and perspectives from the informants that would otherwise be left out in a one-to-one interview (Berg and Lune 2012: 154-192).

I chose to include both male and female youth informants. Many studies from postwar Northern Uganda is about the vulnerability of Northern Ugandan women and girls (see for instance Okello and Hovil 2007, McKay 2010 and Amone-P’Olak 2005). However, both genders have ways of accessing rural land in this society, even though there are reports about how rural land access has for some women been limited by the death of their husbands, especially when trying to return to their late husband’s rural land after displacement (Kligerman 2009: 18, Hopwood 2015: 403-404). Mostly, women gain access to rural land through their father or husband. One of my expert informants, Mrs. Rosalba, stated in the fieldwork interview that to evict or deny a woman access to her late husband’s rural land, is a violation of Acholi cultural norms and perceptions. I hence perceive that such events unfortunately occurs but is not common practice in the Acholi society.

Non-probability purposive sampling was used when choosing the respondents (Matthews and Ross 2010: 166-167). The sample is purposive because it is based on finding informants with similar characteristics; the youth had to be between 18 to 30 years and they had to come from the

area of Gulu or Amuru district. The choice of this sample is largely grounded in the specific social context that these youth have had to withstand during the last thirty years (Berg and Lune 2012: 50-51, Descombe 2007: 17, Matthews and Ross 2010: 225-226). Even though the Ugandan definition of youth is a person whose age is between 12 and 30 (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development 2001), I chose to diminish this age span to 18 to 30 years. This decision is rooted in the need to avoid research ethical dilemmas from the question of who is old enough to give an informed consent (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 71). Also, the time available for the fieldwork put restrictions on the possibility to gather informed consent from the guardians of minors. The age of majority in Uganda is 18 years. The person is at this age not in the need of any guardian's permission to participate in the research project. Raising the age from 12 to 18 hereby saved us the time consuming work of obtaining such permissions.

The sample is a non-probability sample because it cannot be said to represent Acholi youth population as a whole. Apart from the estimates given by the expert informants few or no general conclusions can be drawn from this sample (Ibid.). Still, the case of the Acholi youth can be seen as one among other similar cases. The study stands as an empirical contribution which can play a role of significance in itself (Denscombe 2007: 43).

I interviewed seven youth informants who had resettled in an urban place (called YU (number)) and six who has settled in a rural place (called YR (number)). To avoid sample bias the research team, including my research assistant and I, agreed in advance of the fieldwork on the necessity of providing a diverse sample of youth informants with regards to varied social background, gender and place of settlement in the search for a diversity of perspectives. The youth informants came from different places on the social ladder, of whom some had lived in IDP camps while others lived in Gulu town during the war. Some were familiar with rural way of living while others had mostly experienced urban life. With such varied backgrounds not all the youth had been affected by the war in the same way and to the same extent. For instance, it was imminent that youth who had lived in town throughout the war period had lived more protected from the ravages of the war than youth who in some periods lived in rural areas during the war. This is because the rural areas around Gulu town were more affected by the fighting than town itself.

The perspectives of the youth informants were anticipated to answer the research question from micro-level perspectives by sharing their personal life experiences. The need for complementary

macro-perspectives was why four experts were interviewed. They were selected by the research assistant on the ground of their societal roles, trust among the local people, year-long working experience and influential historical achievements.

The research assistant gave leaders in the local communities of Pabbo and Bungatira the task to choose rural youth between 18 and 30 years of age. In hindsight I realized we should have been more specific in our request to the community leaders in relation to the criteria for the selection of the informants. However, the sample youth had varied levels of oral skills and functions in their local society. The town youth informants were not chosen by community leaders, but by the research assistant and his wife. Both of them have income generating jobs in Gulu town and picked the informants who were easily accessible in their social network surrounding their jobs. This can have made respondents who were more privileged than the majority of youth, more accessible when selecting the sample. The research team became increasingly aware of this in the end of the fieldwork, but unfortunately then our time was ending.

4.4.1 Introduction of informants

a) Rwot Yusuf Adek is a traditional cultural leader of Pageya in Gulu. “Rwot” is the Acholi word for “chief” or “king”. He played an important role in the Peace Process that eventually ended in a ceasefire between the LRA and the government of Uganda in 2006. He is among few people who have been given the chance to mediate in the war through conversations with the leader of the LRA, Joseph Kony. Because of government suspicion against him in the wake of the war he has been put in prison ten times. Today he is struggling to acquire funding in order to build a cultural center in Gulu in order to preserve the traditional Acholi culture.

b) Lukwiya Francis is the program coordinator for ARLPI - Acholi Religious Leaders’ Peace Initiative⁶. By their own description ARLPI is “an interfaith peace building and conflict transformation organization formed in 1997 as a proactive response to the conflict in Northern

⁶ <http://www.arlpi.org/about-us>

Uganda”. One of its key successes is their participation in the development of the Ugandan Amnesty Act that gives amnesty to ex-combatants rebels⁷.

c) Rosalba Oywa is a Nobel Peace Prize nominee of 2005. She is educated as a teacher. Among a range of engagements in civil society she was the program director of ACORD - Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development⁸ in Gulu, as well as a Regional Coordinator for the Coalition for Peace in Africa⁹. She has a burning engagement for the victims of war in Northern Uganda, and has played a crucial role in advocating for peace in Northern Uganda during the war, even though this put her life and health at great risk. Among the Acholi she is known as one of the few people who dared to “reveal everything” about atrocities committed against people in Northern Uganda. She has been a voice of the Acholi people internationally (Lawino 2012). Currently one of her biggest engagements is the struggle against land grabbing in Northern Uganda by the government and its foreign investment partners.

d) Orach Otim was the first camp leader of the biggest IDP camp in Northern Uganda, Pabbo IDP camp, which was declared a camp the 28th of October 1996. He was politically elected Local Council Chairman of the camp in 2001. Today he is no longer interested in fighting politically, but continues his struggle for the revival of the Acholi society by documenting historical events and teaching people inside and outside Acholi society about Acholi culture and history in an attempt to rebuild the society.

4.4.2 Introduction of youth informants

YR1 is a 23 year old man from Pabbo in Amuru district. He has completed senior four but had to leave school due to lack of funding. Currently he lives on his customary land in the same area and provides for himself, his mother and some of his sister’s children from farm work. The size of his rural land was reduced when he returned from Pabbo IDP camp after the war.

YU2 is a 20 year old man from Pabbo in Amuru district. He has completed senior four from Gulu town but had to leave school due to lack of funding. Currently he lives in an apartment on his customary land which is inside the urban trading center of Pabbo, what used to be Pabbo IDP

⁷ [https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl-nat.nsf/0/7d2430f8f3cc16b6c125767e00493668/\\$FILE/Ugandan+Amnesty+Act+2000.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl-nat.nsf/0/7d2430f8f3cc16b6c125767e00493668/$FILE/Ugandan+Amnesty+Act+2000.pdf)

⁸ <http://www.acordinternational.org/our-work/where/uganda/>

⁹ <http://www.c-r.org/who-we-are/people/author/rosalba-oywa>

camp. He works in a saloon. He sold his piece of rural customary land to afford one year of secondary school in agreement with his father.

YU3 is a 25 year old man from Gulu. He is currently pursuing his bachelor degree at a university in the country's capital, Kampala. When he is home on holiday he lives with his parents. He spends this time working in his father's many businesses as well as doing income generating activities on his rural customary land.

YU4 is a woman from Gulu (age was not mentioned during the interview), who from the age of primary school grew up with relatives in Entebbe, because of the unrest sparked by the war in Gulu. She is currently a student at a university in Kampala. During holidays she lives with her parents in Gulu town. Her father owns a workshop in semi-urban Gulu and a homestead there. He coordinates income generating activities on a rural land he bought in Atiak, and their customary land is placed in semi-urban Gulu.

YU5 is a woman from Gulu (age was not mentioned during the interview). Currently she is pursuing her bachelor degree at Gulu University. Her father is retired and her mother has passed away. She lives with her older sister in an apartment which they are renting in Gulu Town. During the war she moved with her family to Karuma, south of Gulu, to get away from the unrest sparked by the war. In 2002 the family moved back to Gulu. She and her siblings have access to rural customary land, but have little time to go there due to school and income generating activities in Gulu town.

YR6 is a 26 year old man from a village in Bungatira subcounty. From year 2000 to 2005 he lived in a nearby IDP camp. He has completed secondary school from places in Uganda that were not or less affected by the war in Northern Uganda. Currently he lives in a rural area because he cannot afford to go for higher education. His father is deceased and his mother is alive. He works as a teacher and a farmer to save money for higher education. He currently utilizes his customary land.

YR7 is a 30 year old woman from a village in Bungatira subcounty. She is the mother of four children and lives on her husband's rural customary land, where they work as farmers. She ended her education in senior three due to lack of funding. She lived in a nearby IDP camp from 2001 to 2009.

YU8 is a 23 year old man from Pader. He lived in an IDP camp there from 2000 to 2005. Before moving to the camp he lived on his rural customary land in a village. His brother and father stepped on a land mine in their village, which delayed YU8's education with three years. When the brother recovered YU8 got the chance to finish senior four, ordinary level. From there an NGO paid for his vocational training as a mechanic. Today he works as a mechanic in Gulu town. He rents a place to live there, but goes regularly to cultivate in his village to provide him and his siblings an additional source of income.

YU9 is a 30 year old man from a village in Gulu. Currently he rents a place to live in Gulu town for him and his three children whom he sends to school in Gulu town. In 1993 his father was killed by rebels. He stayed with his mother and siblings most of the time during the war. For two years, from 2003 to 2004, he lived in a nearby IDP camp. He had to drop out of school in primary six. Since 2005 he has driven a boda boda motorcycle as his main source of income.

YR10 is a 21 year old woman from Bungatira subcounty. From 1998 to 2008 she lived in an IDP camp close to her village area. She lives with her parents on their rural customary land and commutes to town several times per week to work as a tailor. After the war, her family lost a small part of their customary rural land to some neighbours in a land wrangle.

YR11 is an 18 year old man from Bungatira subcounty. He is currently attending secondary school and lives on his rural customary land. During the war he and his family got displaced in Gulu town from 1996 to year 2000. From there they moved to a local IDP camp closer to their rural homestead, where they stayed up to 2008. From that time they resettled back on their rural customary land.

YR12 is a man from Bungatira subcounty (age was not mentioned during the interview). He is currently engaged in vocational training in motor vehicle technology. From 1998 to 2008 he was displaced in a nearby IDP camp, but resettled on his rural customary land after the war.

YU13 is a 23 year old woman from Gulu town. She is currently pursuing her bachelor degree at a university in Kampala. She spends her holidays in Gulu together with her parents and brothers. Her family has several sources of income and has bought a land in Gulu town where they now live permanently. Due to two different land wrangles in rural areas she does not currently have access to rural land. This includes limited access to her customary land.

4.5 Data collection methods

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

I chose semi-structured interview as a data collection method. This method allows the respondent to talk freely without guidelines that can potentially limit the respondent and provide a space where the respondent's perception about a topic can be the subject. Still, the method enables some loose guidance by the interviewer in the interview situation. Interview questions are being prepared by the interviewer before the interview takes place. However, there is no strict need for the informant to answer all the questions that have been prepared as long as the "outline of topics" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 130) is covered. The semi-structured interview method enabled me to follow a track of topics that came unexpectedly, a flexibility that was highly appreciated as the answers to my questions were not always foreseen. The level of which the informants controlled the interview or acted more as a participant answering questions more passively, varied. I therefore conducted a mix between participant and informant interviews (Matthews and Ross 2010: 220). The interviews with the youth were closer to the participant interview than the interviews with the expert of which two out of four interviews consisted of few interview questions and long monologues given by the expert. The two interviews with rwot Yusuf Adek and Mrs. Rosalba were to a large extent dominated by the informants' control over what was being said. This was related to the informant's age and authority and their ability to dominate the conversation. I did however try to "follow a set of topics or questions for each interview" (Ibid.: 221).

At times I had to guide more specific questions in order to open up a conversation. However, I found it harder to get the informants in the focus group to share their experiences than in the one-to-one interviews. There seemed to be great consensus among the three interviewees in the focus group, and it was hard to reach a level of debate. This can be because the group was quite homogenous in terms of socio-economic background. The presence of other group members can also have restricted these informants' perceptions of their freedom to talk openly. Additionally, I did not push the informants to talk unless they wanted to share. In the search for a dynamic debate with opposing arguments the research team could have selected a more heterogeneous group of informants with more varied backgrounds, but this is hard to foresee in forehand.

When planning to conduct the interviews the research assistant and I agreed on the need to provide interview settings that protected the people involved from too much disturbance, activity and people from external settings. This was provided by the research assistant who enabled a sheltered interview environment for all the interviews that were conducted. Concretely, the interviews with the youth informants took place in the garden of a hotel in Gulu town, fenced eating places, the subcounty headquarter in Bungatira village and inside the private home one of the expert informants. The expert informants were interviewed in their private homes, except one who was interviewed in his office.

Most youth that I interviewed spoke quite good English. Some of the few informants who struggled to express themselves accurately in English, still insisted on answering in English even though a translator was present to interpret in the local language, Acholi. The research assistant and I found this to be unfortunate since it can have affected the level of preciseness in some of the data material. The interview length varied from around thirty minutes to more than two hours. Although I wished for some of the interviews to last longer, I had to respect their time, energy and motivation for participating in the interviews.

4.6 Data analysis

The data analysis in this study is a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is “a process of segmentation, categorization and relinking of aspects of the data prior to final interpretation”. In the data analysis I search for themes, as was done during the coding of the data material.

Furthermore, I try to find relationships between these themes. When referring to “relationships” I do not hereby claim to have found any causality between the themes, but I look for correlations, for instance between regained rural land access and rural resettlement (Bryman 2012: 372- 385).

4.6.1 Transcription and coding

I audio recorded the interviews. This enabled me to concentrate on the interview dialogue and the interviewee instead of writing notes. It also helped me to review the interviews in detail after leaving Uganda. By the use of this tool I was able to clarify misunderstandings that may not have been as easy to clarify without this technology. Some constraints that can follow from audio

recording the respondents, though. For example, audio recording can hamper the informants in responding freely to the questions when knowing that the information given is being stored. The respondents may feel the need for reassurance that what they answer will not be used against them at a later point in time. They may also feel distracted by the event, simply because they are not used to being audio recorded which places themselves in an unusual situation. Due to being aware of these constraints I spent some time explaining to the informants why I wish to audio record them and asked for their consent to do so.

After the fieldwork had been conducted the sound recorded interviews were transcribed and coded before the final phase of the analysis. After transcribing the interview material I coded it by copying and pasting pieces of the interviews in smaller thematic document folders in my computer, arranged after topics relevant for the thesis. This was to organize the data material before the data analysis.

4.7 Ethical considerations

As researchers there are certain norms of conduct that must be followed if our projects are to be recognized as morally and ethically accepted. These rules are crucial for the safeguarding of the people involved in social science research projects. The preservation of their welfare is a number one concern that is to work as the decisive factor in any research dilemma. The overarching principle in this sense is “do no harm” (Baron 1996, Waliman 2011: 48). In this lies a respect for the human participants. Respect is not only important during the data collection phase. Also the way the researcher treats the information given in the phase of data analysis is a precondition for good ethical research. Honesty is hereby a key word, both in the relationship to participants and in the final research product. As well as honest behavior being morally right, an honest piece of work also strengthens the credibility of the research. However to work in an honest manner does not mean that the work will be completely uncoloured by the researcher’s own perceptions. Even though a bias free research is a goal that the researcher struggle towards, the researcher is also the holder of his or her own world of perceptions following a range of different life experiences. Thus it is important to inform the reader about the researcher’s theoretical and ontological stand. This I have done in chapter 3. However the struggle towards scientific objectivity is a core element that distinguishes academic research from political information gathering (Walliman

2011: 42-45, 49). To make sure that we don't step into unethical pitfalls, guidelines to follow like the consent of information and the preservation of confidentiality are crucial.

I retrieved an oral consent in every interview. This was obtained in an introductory part of the interview conversation before starting to audio record the interviews. The consent was informed because I made the interviewees aware of what the information that he or she was going to give me would be used for in the future. I informed them about how and why I wished to obtain this information. I gave them my full name, where I come from and the name of the university of which I belong. The informants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any given moment; before, during and after the interview. In addition I assured them of their right not to answer question that they do not feel like answering. I also assured them of the fact that the information they will give me will be used for academic purposes purely (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 70-72, Berg and Lune 2012: 90-93).

I was aware of the importance of the first minutes of the interviews for the establishment of as much trust and respect as possible between the researchers and the informant. Because of this I tried to avoid anything that could be perceived as intruding during the beginning of the interview conversation.

A confirmation letter from Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), stamped and signed, was given to each expert informants together with the research proposal. This seems to have increased the credibility of the research project in the eyes of the experts. Still, skepticism became evident when one of the expert informants put a precondition that if he were to participate in the study we had to ensure him that none of the data material given from him was going to be used for any political purposes. That assurance was given.

The youth informants were made aware of the unquestionable anonymity and the confidentiality of the identity information they share. They were assured that no information that can track down their identity will be shared with anyone except the research assistant and the researcher (Berg and Lune 2012: 93, Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 72-73). From the experts I asked for permission to use their identity in the thesis, because an openness around their merits can enhance their credibility. All the experts accepted that their full names can be used in this thesis.

As part of the process of anonymization of the youth informants I marked the youth informants with a code to distinguish between them in the phase of analyzing the data. For instance one of the youth informants have been coded as YR6. “Y” stands for “youth”, “R” stands for “rural”, meaning that he or he has resettled in a rural area. Likewise, “U” in “YU2” stands for “urban” and refers to place of resettlement. “6” is the number of youth of whom made up a number of thirteen. The number does not distinguish between rural and urban youth informants. It describes the number of youth informants participating in the study.

To keep the respondents’ names and identity information hidden it is important to clear any traceable information from the data storage materials after the end of the research project. After audio recording the interviews I stored them in my computer with a secret password (Walliman 2011: 50).

Some of the informants came to the interview with an open mind and expressed a confident attitude towards the interview. This may be related to the fact that the people who the research assistant engaged to pick youth informants, were all people of authority and respect in their local communities, currently or previously holding high positions. It is then important not to ignore the possibility that youth respondents may have felt pressured or compelled to participate in the study in fear of not disappointing their local leader or person of authority. To use people of authority to gather respondents can hence have both fortunate and unfortunate consequences. However, many of the respondents expressed an excitement to join the study. The emphasis on voluntariness in the introductory part of the interview can have contributed to this positive atmosphere. All the participants were above 18 years and participate voluntarily in the study.

Chapter 5: Empirical findings and analysis

In this research I have assessed the role that Acholi youths’ rural land access plays in their urban/rural resettlement after two decades of war and displacement. To be able to make such an assessment, it is crucial to uncover factors driving youth to settle in rural or urban place. Before I dig deeper into these driving factors in part 2 of this chapter, I will in part 1 discuss some social contextual elements which seem to lie as a foundation for the social environment in which the youth make decisions of a specific place to resettle.

Part 1: Changing perceptions

1.1 The meaning of land in Acholi

Land as a concept has a range of meanings, constructed socially in different social and cultural contexts (Kukla 2000: 1-3). Land among the Acholi people was traditionally not only a material piece of soil that one could live on, earn money and eat from. Land was the manifestation of tradition, cultural identity and roots. It was on Acholi customary land that the dead were buried, beliefs about their spirits lived on, where family togetherness and cooperation were preserved and norms and values were transferred from one generation to another. It represented continuity and taught the young generations how to become well-functioning adults who take responsibility for the welfare of their group and thus contribute to the preservation of a peaceful and productive society (Okot 2013, Annan et al. 2006: 75). The concepts of social identity, tradition and roots connected to land were essential for human well-being, because by these the need for social belonging was covered (Frueh 2003: 10-11).

When asking about the meaning of land among the Acholi today I found that all the youth informants emphasized its material value, but that the cultural-spiritual notion connected to it seems to have been weakened during and after the war. The youth informants explained that land is a place to raise animals, cultivate for sale and their own consumption, and a place to create a homestead. Four youth informants said that land is not only for them, but for the future generations coming after them. All of them talked about the social and economic opportunities that can derive from having land. Profit from sale of crops can for instance provide youth with boda boda motorcycles and ensure them additional income. Additional income can enable someone to pay school fees for family members as well as to save enough money for their own education. For some, cultivation of rural land and rural settlement was not a choice but a necessity of which it is hard to survive without. YR1 was particularly dependent on his rural land access.

Interviewer: How do you think you would live your life if you did not have access to land?

YR1: Yeah, I think that one would have been very difficult, because traditionally we depend on land. It is only land where you can eat, where you can live, where you can do everything, so assuming that access was not there, I couldn't manage life without the land. Maybe, especially also with the people who are behind me, the people I'm now being responsible for, where would I keep them? Maybe I would have to

run away. Maybe I would run away and leave them behind so that I could find my life, because I wouldn't manage to keep them.

An urban youth informant, YU8, said that even though he favors urban lifestyle he is still planning to build a home in his rural customary land so that he can spend time with his family and be "home". He then brought forward the social value of his rural land.

Interviewer: Why can't you just get a plot in town and live in town?

YU8: At first you know, when you are at home you feel better than within the area [in town]...

Interviewer: Yeah, why?

YU8: Because there you have the parents. All the siblings are there. You've been sitting with them, talking with them, so you'll be happy.

Among the youth little was said about the role that rural customary land plays for the preservation of Acholi cultural and spiritual values. However, a study from Kligerman (2009) stated the importance of the rural customary land in Acholi cosmological beliefs (p. 26-27). The customary land's spiritual value was confirmed during my visit to the research assistant's homestead in Pukure village in Gulu where he grew up as a child. There were several small and two big clay pot with lids placed in the middle of the compound in front of the family house that had broken down after being abandoned for a decade. I was told that inside the small pots the umbilical cords of newborn children were put. In the big pots deceased twin brothers were buried. In Acholi culture twins are seen as having spiritual powers. They are so-called "jok children" (Whyte et al. 2014: 603). To open these pots was a strong taboo and nobody would even think of such an act due to the sacristry of this shrine. This shows that up until recently customary land carried values that reached far beyond its material value. The three flat thumb stones with deceased grown up relatives two meters away from the house on its left side, also illustrates this. Whyte et al. (2014) confirmed that the practice of the pots was maintained in the IDP camps (Ibid.).

During fieldwork interviews, YU3 and YU13 expressed the wish to be buried on their customary land when they die. YU3 said that there are beliefs among people that make them favor to be buried on their rural customary land.

Interviewer: Does the ancestral land play an important role for the spirits of the dead?

YU3: Yeah, that's what they tell us. Because if you are not being buried peacefully, supposing you have been buried in town here, there is some superstition. There are certain things scientifically or biblically you cannot explain or they just tell us: "If you have been buried from town here, your soul, your spirit will not rest comfortably. Cause people are mixed up with various categories [in town], so some people just come and disturb the dead. It's not like once there in the village." Yeah, so that is what they would prefer...to be buried in your ancestral land.

The statement of YU3 indicates that traditional spiritual beliefs concerning land is still present in the postwar era. However, one youth claimed that this practice doesn't exist anymore. YU4 said that she wants to be buried in town. She informed that people nowadays bury their relatives both in their land in town and on church cemeteries. Burying people in their customary land was "some time back", she claimed, but she also said that she does not have a strong attachment to rural areas and her customary land. Hence, her ground to makes such claims may not have been as strong as claims of the ones whose activities are more in rural areas.

The youth informants' lack of emphasis on customary land's spiritual value may indicate that this value is weakened, at least among Acholi youth. Another factor indicating a weakening is the practice of burying people outside the customary land, like on land in town or church cemeteries, which seems to have become more widespread during and after the war. This new practice is likely to have been a natural consequence of the inaccessibility of rural land during the war. Still, since rural land access has been regained after the war, there is a desire among people to exhume the dead bodies of their deceased relatives and rebury them on the customary land, according to my research assistant. From this, a reactivation of this traditional practice looks to be in process.

It was out of my scope to uncover the extent of which spiritual beliefs connected to the customary land is still maintained by the older generations. From information given by youth informants, though, customary land's spiritual meaning seems to be reduced while its material value is strengthened.

YU9: These boys here, when they came to the camp, life was not same with life in the village. Life in camp was like staying in town, because it was a small area where you could struggle to live. Maybe, mainly, it was now money. You see? So these youth developed this idea of money so much. That is why now going back they look at that land as something they would get money [from] so that they survive the way they were surviving in the camp, because the camp was almost the same with town.

Still, the youth informants expressed a feeling of belonging to their rural, customary land. This feeling of belonging seems to have left traces in the youth even though some of the ones I interviewed had never put their feet on this land. This shows that even though the spiritual value of the customary land may be weaker in the mind of the youth than for the generations before them, they still feel connected to this land as their “place of origin”.

1.2 The changing importance of money as wealth

Before the 1990’s the Acholi people were known to own a lot of cattle. Cattle were seen as an important source of wealth. Cattle keeping and their main source of income which came from cultivation, reduced the importance of the money economy (Bøås and Hatleøy 2005: 7).

Rwot Yusuf Adek: The animals were our bank. When you want to take your children to school, you sell your animal. So they keep the lands just purely for feeding, for digging, for feeding. It turns the contrary one now; the lands you sell to buy a boda boda.

After a range of cattle rusting in Northern Uganda, war and displacement from agricultural land, the Acholi people lost most of its substitute for money. Finnström wrote that the cattle was looted by the Ugandan Army in the end of the 1980’s (2001, 2008: 71-74). Oleke et al. (2005) claim that people from the Karamojong¹⁰ stood behind the looting of the cattle in the end of the 1980’s and early 1990’s (p. 2630-2631).

Such major transformations in means of wealth accumulation have influenced perceptions of wealth among the Acholi people. From relying on huge herds of cattle to pay children’s school fees and other necessities, crops from cultivation became the biggest resource when trying to educate children after the cattle rustling. During this time and the coming decade most people in the rural areas were chased into IDP camps, losing their chance to accumulate wealth from the land. The ones who dared, and quite a few did, to leave the camp to cultivate in order to provide a desperately needed additional nutrition were at large risk of being abducted and killed. YR1 and YU3 were abducted by rebels in this way, but managed to escape after some few days. YR1 has not seen his brother ever since.

¹⁰ The Karamojong is a tribe in Northeastern-Uganda who live a traditional life as cattle pastoralists (Dyer et al. 2008: 4).

This information is relevant with regards to seeing the definition of money in a wider social and historical context. During the interviews the new and enhanced meaning of money was often brought to the debate by expert informants.

Mrs. Rosalba: We would wait for our beans, our sesame to mature, then we would eat some and we sell. That was the real way of getting money. But the moment we came to camps, life became so hard and many people now started petty trading, doing all sorts of thing and that was giving cash income on a daily basis. The majority of people have learnt, even me, what I have seen, because I also had to cope in that way, is that that rapid turnover and getting cash income in your hand is much better than to wait for your crops to mature for three months, and that is what young people are looking for.

The program coordinator of the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI), Lukwiya Francis, confirmed this statement.

Mr. Lukwiya: ...as we moved out of the camp, people learnt about money. The land became commercialized. People started selling land.

The lack of rural land access during the war led Acholi youth who grew in displacement away from their rural land, to know unskilled day-to-day work in an urban setting. In town youth need to have money to eat and live, while in the village eating depends as much on the amount of work that has been done in the farm and the size and quality of the herds of animals accessible. The, at first, forced settlement in urban and semi-urban environments hence changed Acholi youths' perception of wealth from land and animals towards day-to-day services providing money instantly.

1.3 Youths' interest to sell rural land

Widespread interest among Acholi youth to sell parts of their customary land was repeatedly brought up by the informants themselves during the interviews. Considering how Acholi youth struggle financially after the war, the information about youths' willingness to give up land was surprising, as agricultural work is often the only income source in this region today that is somewhat stable (International Alert 2013). Often told was that many youth, particularly the ones who reside in urban areas, see that they will have greater use of for instance a boda boda motorcycle to earn an income on a daily basis, than the piece of rural land. Youth with the interest to sell rural customary land and who have the authority to do so, usually start to sell one part. When they are in the need of more money, they sell another. This is how some allow

significant parts of their customary land to disappear from their family and future generations, I was told.

Branch (2013) stated that the selling of land is at times resulting from poverty among youth caused by structural violence (p. 3160). Social institutions have not managed to meet the basic needs of people in Northern Uganda (Galtung 1969). The war made large parts of the people economically inactive for two decades. This, in addition to Uganda being a low income country, is making it hard for many Acholi youth and their caretakers to acquire a living standard that covers both necessary health care, basic needs and increasing prices of education, which is fundamental for obtaining sources of financial viability (Annan et al. 2006).

Mr. Lukwiya informed that the economic value of rural land has changed as a result of war and displacement which can partly explain why the interest among Acholi youth to sell land, has grown.

Mr. Lukwiya: Before people came to the camp, the issue of land, if it was there, was very minimum. And the economic value that people attach to land was from the proceeds that come out of land. But after the camp, the economic value that people attach to the land is to see “this piece of land would cost me how much? If I sell it, how much am I going to get?”

Rwot Yusuf Adek blamed the many Acholi youths’ willingness to sell land on their lack of education. He believed that proper education will discipline them and teach them the importance of engaging in a long term plan. YR6 agreed with the rwot. He also blamed the increasing interest among youth to sell land on the lack of teaching from the elderly people. He said that when people came to the IDP camps, the use of their rural land drastically diminished. This enhanced the willingness among the older generation to sell pieces of land. People of a higher age were then the ones mainly obtaining the authority to make such decisions. When they died in huge numbers and authority over land was transferred to youth, the youth started copying the elderly people’s behavior, YR6 claimed. YR11 confirmed this statement.

YR11: You know when the family members, like the elders, are not interested in selling the land, then the younger ones will not also be interested in selling the land. But if the elders are interested, then the younger ones can also get interested.

In connection to people’s regained freedom to utilize rural land in Northern Uganda, perceptions among the Acholi about the usefulness of rural land seems to have been strengthened after the

war. As land can yet again be utilized due to a longer period with absence of violent combatants, the demand for both rural and urban land among Acholi people has gone up.

From this, a wave of privatization of land has spread. This has led to a significant increase of prices of land, hence making purchase of private land less possible for youth who have not yet had the time to accumulate enough money for such purpose (see 2.3.4).

Mr. Lukwiya claimed that the communal customary land system, where people work on the same land in groups, is broken down and has instead been replaced by a lot of land privatization. As a consequence, it has become easier for someone outside the communal group to buy land in Northern Uganda. However, from the conversations with the informants the custom of consulting elders and parents in the family before acquiring authority to sell land, seems to be strong. Still, this requires older people in the family to be alive and present. Mr. Lukwiya said that youth do in some cases acquire authority from their family members to sell land, even though this can happen in a violent manner.

Mr. Lukwiya: When they [the youth] say, of course with the youthful mind, whatever they decide they want it done. And sometimes they oppress the elders and say: “For me I want to sell this piece of land, and I want to buy a motorcycle”. So if maybe the parents want to say: “No!” they may even give threat, death threat that: “If I don’t sell this land I am going to kill you, because you want me to die, because I am not working”.

This violent attitude was according to Mr. Lukwiya being taught during observation and participation in warfare and destitute IDP camp life. Northern Ugandan youths’ high exposure to violent episodes during the war has been confirmed by Annan et al. (2006). They found that on average Northern Ugandan youth have experienced 9 out of 31 violent events listed to them (p. 51-62). McElroy et al. (2011) wrote about how cultural and occupational deprivation in the IDP camps increased people’s acceptance of verbal, physical and sexual violence. The acceptance was deeply connected to a feeling of powerlessness (p. 204-206).

YU9 claimed that the willingness among many youth to sell land must be seen in connection to changing perceptions of the meaning of rural land in Northern Uganda. Still, there are variations in the level of authority that each youth have in their particular households, an authority which is connected to the existence and level of authority of their parents. The portion of youth who have interest to sell rural land, was beyond the scope of this research to uncover. What can be clearly

stated, though, from interviews with youth informants, is that even if youth have interest to sell customary land, they do not always get the chance to put this interest into practice when they do not have enough power to resist the network of family members who want to keep the land in the family. However, an important factor which seems to have sparked the practice of Acholi youth selling their customary land, is the destruction of many family networks as a result of war. The hardship of maintaining a family during war and displacement was expressed by Mrs. Rosalba.

Mrs. Rosalba: How do they [destitute Acholi displaced men] expect to raise their own children if they continue with these types of activities; sport betting, playing cards and getting money? How do you maintain a family by doing that? A family can only be maintained if you are able to cultivate. If you own your own land.

I asked the youth informants about their willingness to sell their rural land if someone tempted them with a large amount of money for it and they had the authority to sell the land. All the thirteen youth informants, except YU4, who said she would have sold a part of it, opposed this suggestion eagerly. YU2, who had already sold his land, also opposed this idea, and said that he regretted his and his father's decision to sell his share of customary land. The strong reactions from youth informants against selling customary land can be seen in context of social norms and values. Several times it was mentioned that in the past and to some extent presently it is common practice for the older generations to transfer the value of preserving land inside the family or clan, to children and youth. An important concern in this respect is to make sure that wealth of land is not lost from the family. A common thinking is that a motorcycle gets broken and loses its value, while fertile land does not. Land is a stable and sustainable source of wealth. To sell customary land is hence a social abomination. Social rules around the selling of private land, though, are more liberal, because private land is seen as a plot for just one person or a small family. In contrast, customary land belongs to a big group of people of extended family members. In the interviews, youth would commonly respond that the customary land is not theirs and from this they do not have the authority to sell it.

The opposition against selling rural, customary land, which the youth informants showed during the interviews, stands in contrast to the claim that a large portion of Acholi youth sell their customary, rural land. However, instead of this being a contradiction, it can be viewed as an ambivalence which must be seen in context of the changing meaning of wealth in the Acholi society, as previously described. For instance, whereas more non-monetary wealth was

accumulated in rural areas in the past, for instance through bigger herds of cattle, today Acholi youth have lost access to this type of wealth and seem to associate life around rural land with a higher degree of poverty than before.

From this perspective today's Acholi youth have been put in a limbo. The war looks to have sparked a gap between generations, in which today's Acholi youth stand as a "middle" generation, trapped between tradition and modernity. On one side, Acholi youth seem to be trying to hold onto their customs and traditional ways of thinking, which is embedded in their customary, rural land and its preservation. They hence look back at the traditional practices of the generation before them in their search for a feeling of belonging and continuity. On another side, the war seems to have pushed Acholi youth some steps closer to urban, modern lifestyle and values. The youth perceive themselves to be in the need of following modern changes of their time, and this involves a search for a life where they can be less dependent on farming for their own subsistence.

In their attempt to maneuver through this landscape of ambivalence, Acholi youth are sometimes confronted with difficult decisions. An illustrating example is YU2, who consulted his elders about his wish to continue school in spite of his parents' incapacity to fund his education after senior three. He then agreed with his father to sell his share of customary land in order to continue his education. However, the income from the sale was not enough to complete senior six, and YU2 had to drop out of school after completing ordinary level (senior four). At the time of the interview, he was working as in a saloon and seemed unhappy about his and his father's agreement to sell his piece of land, because it has deprived him from having "a land to come back to". His choices was grounded in his desire "to find a way of living easy somewhere", but he ended up having neither a higher level of education nor a customary, rural land to serve him in the future. In addition to having weakened his chances of making a living for himself, he lost the land that his future children would have inherited from him.

Part 2: Resettlement strategies among Acholi youth - push and pull factors between urban and rural settlement

In this part of the analysis of my findings I will look at what makes Acholi youth choose to either live in a rural or urban place. With roots in Lee's (1966) theory of push and pull factors in migration, I have tracked down advantages and disadvantages associated with urban and rural

places of resettlement after the war. First, I will look at rural disadvantages pushing Acholi youth to urban settlement (2.2). Then I will look at urban advantages pulling youth to urban places (2.3). Thereafter, I will search into rural disadvantages pushing youth to settle in a rural place (2.4). Lastly, I will look at factors working as rural advantages which are pulling Acholi youth to settle rurally (2.5). From fieldwork interviews an overwhelming number of factors favoring urban youth resettlement, was mentioned. These were factors that both pushed and pulled youth to resettle in urban places after the war. Factors driving youth to return to their rural was mentioned less.

2.1 Why didn't Acholi youth just go back "home"?

According to perceptions of expert informants in this study, a significant majority of the youth population have regained land access in rural areas after the war. The expert informants estimated that the youth who are currently without land access are in minority. Nevertheless are these youth in a particularly unfortunate situation. The importance of having access to rural land among the Acholi is illustrated by the social problems that the youth without land access face. Informants reported that youth of this group are more commonly than other youth seen drinking redundantly, gambling and sports betting in town. Throughout the interviews complaints were directed towards youth who did not utilize their rural land. The common denominator between the youth who lack the opportunity to utilize land and the youth who have the opportunity but lack the interest to utilize land, is informants' perception of these youth as lazy, materialistic and without respect for the elders (see also 2.2.4).

The IDP camp was like a prison with limited freedom of movement, poor nutrition and social services (Bøås and Hatleøy 2005). Life for its inhabitants was put on hold. Around 2010 the displaced Acholi people were given the freedom to return to their customary land where majority resided before the LRA-UPDF war broke out (Ibid.: 1). Rooted in Acholi youths' perception of "home" as their rural customary land, one could think that the war-affected youth would return to their rural land in the village after receiving the freedom to do so (Okot 2013). This land represent a source of livelihood and a feeling of belonging of which both have been out of reach for most Acholi youth during the war. In spite of this, as perceived by Mr. Lukwiya, more than half of Acholi youth have chosen to resettle in urban areas.

It would have been easy to understand the urban resettlement among Acholi youth if they had lacked rural land access, but according to the perceptions of the informants, this is not the case. The urban resettlement among Acholi youth shows an opposite trend if compared to the displaced population as a whole. The UNHCR (2011) reported that by 2011 “most of the estimated 1.84 million who were displaced had returned to their areas of origin” in rural areas (p. 101). Additionally, a study from Annan et al. (2006) showed that Northern Ugandan youth suffered immediately after the war from high unemployment and a lack of educational opportunities. In my study, informants confirmed that to resettle in an urban area in Northern Uganda involves obtaining more money-generating activities than in a rural area. Why then would so many Acholi youth choose urban resettlement now that they have newly gained rural land access and are struggling with small financial means?

2.2 Urban push factors – rural disadvantages

The study has so far uncovered claims of a centralization of Acholi youth in urban areas sparked by the LRA-UPDF war in Northern Uganda. In this section I want to go beyond this claim to present factors driving this urban centralization in the search for a deeper understanding of the situation. According to Lee (1966) disadvantages of the place of origin can work as push factors, pushing migrants to their place of destination from their place of origin. This study reveals some of these factors.

2.2.1 “Where is the boundary of my land?”

Many Acholi youth do not know where the boundary of their customary land is. This is particularly evident among youth who were born in displacement away from this land. Now why cannot these youth go back to the village and ask the neighbours and older relatives about the boundaries of the land, which they are entitled to according to customary law? There are three complicating elements mainly hindering some Acholi youth from disclosing boundary information in order for them to proclaim their land rights.

a) The death of the elderly

One explaining factor is that the agents who transmit such information; members of the older generations, died in huge numbers during the war. At one point “the mortality rates in Northern Uganda were the highest of any emergency situation in the world” (Gelsdorf et al. 2012: 3).

When the people were given the freedom to return to their original homesteads, many old people had not survived the hard living conditions in the IDP camps and the military brutality of the war.

YR6: Many people died. I think it was because of the insurgency, as I told you. People were being killed, being slaughtered like goats, and then the other thing; people were sick. Those elderly people were sick.

The death of the elders shook the foundation of the Acholi society. The elders are seen as the bearers of cultural perceptions, norms and values from one generation to the next. To lose these elders is a problem for Acholi youth who depend much on the knowledge and experiences of these people when trying to resettle on customary land in rural areas.

b) The lost natural rural land demarcations in an oral culture

Secondly, the Acholi people demarcate rural land boundaries with natural demarcations, for instance stones, trees and ant hills. Many of these natural demarcations disappeared when people were absent from rural areas during the decades of displacement.

In addition to this natural evaporation of land boundaries, the anthropogenic warfare explains the missing land demarcations. Dolan (2011) stated that during the war many people were not contended with the behavior of several UPDF soldiers. Civilians exemplified this by claiming that soldiers cut down their trees and ate “their chicken” without consulting the absent and displaced land owners (p. 146). Likewise, the LRA is accused of looting and destroying property during the war (Kligerman 2009: 22-25).

The lost demarcations of rural land must be seen in the context of a postwar weakening of the strong oral culture of the Acholi people. The oral culture was before the war institutionalized through wang’o, a sitting around a bonfire in the household compound in the village. Mr. Orach described wang’o as “the informal educational system of the Acholi”. During this sitting, adults tell stories to the younger generation that are intended to both entertain and transfer necessary

knowledge. This knowledge teaches children and youth how to live in peace and handle challenges of life in a good manner.

According to YU2, it was not possible to arrange wang'o during displacement, because the environment of the IDP camps was "so congested". Hence, the crucial oral knowledge intended for young people to resist hardship in the conditions of which they grow, got lost, and the younger generation was neglected. The lack of oral transaction of information reduced Acholi youths' knowledge about rural land, which in turn put them in a vulnerable position when claiming their plot of land after the war (Kligerman 2009: 25-26). Confusion arising in the wake of local land conflicts about who is the real owner of rural land has made Acholi people more aware of their need for written documents as proof of land ownership, like land titles distributed by Ugandan authorities. The need for such written documentation is also pushed by national government development measures threatening to overtake land from civilians (Mabikke 2011: 19-20).

c) The unwillingness to inform about land boundaries

A third factor explaining how some Acholi youth are prevented from knowing their rural land boundaries, is repeated by several informants to be an unwillingness among relatives and neighbours to reveal this type of information. These people actively refuse to inform youth about demarcations of their land in their village.

Mrs. Rosalba: A family goes there [to their rural customary land] and they know the parents of these people who were born in the camps, are no longer there. They [relatives and neighbours] are not willing to show them the boundary of the land.

The same statement was given by YR6.

YR6: Before we went to camp, we had fewer problems compared to when people returned from camps. Before we went to camp, the people knew exactly their demarcation of their places, the boundaries. People knew them. But now when you came [back from] camp, as I told you, other people died mysteriously. Others were slaughtered. Those ones do not know where their demarcation is and they don't want to show us some of them, so what they did is [that] they would come, settle in your land, try to cause a conflict. When you try to maybe resolve the issue, they cause problems. Silently people are fighting for the land.

Some people inform the youths' about their land demarcations, but will give wrong information for their own material benefit. These people can for instance show the youth a smaller portion of land than what more trustable elders or closer family members would have done.

Mr. Lukwiya: Because they [relatives] know your father died, your mother died, and you don't know your boundaries, they will show you anything. And that is if by luck they would want to show you, they would show you anything. Sometimes they may not show you and say: "Your land is not here".

The emphasis that was given during the interviews on dishonesty and greed among people who deprive Acholi youth from accessing their land, can give the impression that this phenomenon has reached enormous highs. It is important to keep in mind, though, that in addition to the focus on dishonesty and greediness among people, a strong majority have, according to the expert informants, gained or regained land access. I ask: How has majority of Acholi youth regained rural land access if greediness and unwillingness among people to inform about the land have turned into widespread phenomena? There seems to be a lack of correlation between these two factors. Still, greed and dishonesty in a society that is in desperate need for cooperation among people for its revival, do not have to affect a larger part of the population to be defined as a social problem. It is also a problem that can push youth away from their rural homestead.

2.2.2 Fear of landmines and reattacks

Six out of the seventeen informants reported about the problem of land mines during the first years of rural resettlement after the ceasefire in 2006. YU4 said that the land wrangle between her father and some relatives was not rooted in lack of sizeable land, but the fear that parts of the land is filled with land mines. A common competing interest was then to grab hold of the part of the land that was mine free. Both one brother and the father of YU8 were injured by land mines. In spite of the widespread existence of land mines in the first years after the war, the youth informants did not give me the impression that fear of land mines is the current reason for them not to return to their rural land. However, the challenge of land mines has reduced postwar rural land access of Acholi youth in the first phase of resettlement after the end of the war. This can have had repercussions for their current settlement.

The same thing can be said about the impact of fear of reattacks by the fighting parties of the war. This fear limited youths' willingness to return to the most affected rural areas during the

first months and possibly years after the ceasefire (Annan et al. 2006: 3). However, throughout the interviews nobody mentioned anything about fearing military reattacks.

2.2.3 Stigmatization of former abductees re-victimized through social exclusion

When looking at factors that have pushed former displaced youth away from their rural land, the stigmatization of former abductees has played its part, even though this group makes up “a small number of youth” in Northern Uganda (Blattman and Annan 2008: 118). Studies show that when former abducted youth tried to reintegrate into their rural place of origin, several were rejected from their local neighbourhoods because of fear and anger directed towards them (Annan 2011, Amone-P’Olak 2007). These youth, the female youth in particular, were hence prevented from accessing the rural land that they were entitled to (Pavelich 2013: 59, Kligerman 2009). None of my youth informants have been abducted for more than three days before they managed to escape. They did not report about experiencing stigmatization after returning from abduction. This can be due to the short time period of their abduction and few people knowing about it. It is crucial to keep in mind, though, that most of the returnees “were well received by their families upon return” (Annan and Brier 2010: 152).

2.2.4 Cultivation and village life as “hard work”

Before conducting the fieldwork I carried the assumption that rough living conditions in the IDP camps have given the youth the willingness to push themselves far to get out of the poverty and misery which they had been forced to tackle for several years. Hard life resulting from lack of land for cultivation, is confirmed by YU4.

YU4: [Youth] had migrated to urban areas, and land there isn’t enough for cultivation, so they couldn’t cultivate, and it was giving them hard life leading to worse standards of living.

Thus it caught me by surprise when both expert and youth informants said that many Acholi youths are unwilling to work as farmers even though most of them are accessing land for cultivation.

YR6: People mind of themselves. They don’t have time. “Don’t care”-attitude is there so much, but for us who have sat down by our grand grandparents we came to know that land was so important in our life.

Mr. Orach claimed that the lack of land access among many youth immediately after they were released from the IDP camps, pushed youth to urban areas and enhanced their “interest for materialism”. This was confirmed by one of the youth informants.

YU5: Actually the youth in Uganda, most youth they prefer good life, so that in most cases they don't like to utilize the land they have like for example digging the land and maybe selling. They prefer things that deals with good things, but not actually in the village. They want to live in town and have good life.

I: Do you think that's because of war? Has war caused this new mentality?

YU5: Yes, I guess, cause in the time of the war people had to be in the camp and their life has been spoiled. They don't know even things to do with the hard work. They struggle just with life around town, so they have no idea of working hard and getting things you want.

The complaints concerning the spread of urban mentality among Acholi youth also preached their lack of long term thinking manifested in the desire for quick urban money. This money is made from day-to-day work quickly in contrast to slow rural money accumulated through sales of agricultural products.

To understand the allegedly “lazy” group of Acholi youth there is a need to look into their background and the socio-economic context in which they were raised. For instance, Mr. Orach informed that youth who are orphans are particularly exposed to the unwillingness of relatives and neighbours to reveal youths' customary land boundaries. Bøås and Hatleøy (2005) found that in the IDP camp population, “among the children above ten years of age one out of three children have lost at least one of their parents, and as many as 12 percent have lost both” (p. 13). I ask if this group of “lazy” youth largely consists of persons who have lost either one or both parents. Did they get the chance to connect to their land in the village during their first years of life? Are they prevented from accessing land after the war? In other words, are there other factors than laziness that lie behind what can seem like an “I don't care”-attitude? Are these youth many or do the few seem more than they are, because by breaking the social norm which commands youth not to sell customary land, they increase their visibility? More studies needs to be done on this particular topic to get a comprehensive understanding of the situations of these youths.

2.2.5 Population growth

The large population growth in Uganda was claimed by Mrs. Rosalba, YR7 and YU9 to affect youths' rural land access and push Acholi youth away from their rural customary land. They

argued that the more youth who are entitled to a part of customary land, the smaller pieces are divided to each youth, because the size of the land is constant, but the number of people entitled to land is not. If the youths do not expand their land access in some way after they have been given their share, they will again have to divide their share of land to their children, who will acquire even smaller pieces of land.

A study conducted by Stein T. Holden and Keiuro Otsuka (2014) showed that

...increasing population pressure in densely populated rural areas contributes to more rapid rural–urban migration, and creating alternative livelihood opportunities for the migrating youth population is essential to achieving economic development with social stability” (p. 88).

Mr. Lukwiya opposed other respondents’ claim that rural land in Northern Uganda is becoming overpopulated. The population growth has not yet reached that extent, according to him.

Mr. Lukwiya: I wouldn’t say when they moved out of the camp and started living in their original homestead, land became small for us. Of course, people’s population number increased while we were in camp, but still you cannot define that as overpopulation in that land. The land as for now is still giving more than enough for our people. The problem with the access now is not about the size. The problem is...it comes branded with a lot of dishonesty from the people who know the boundaries, from a lot of hatred, from a lot of greed.

This claim was supported by rwot Yusuf Adek.

Rwot Yusuf Adek: In Acholi, as the population, we still know that our land is big, is more than our size of the population. If we get the resources we can still survive out of the lands.

These statements show that there are varied perceptions about the effect of population growth on rural land accessibility among Acholi people themselves. However, if it is a common perception among Acholi youth that they face reduction of rural land access through population growth, it can strengthen their wish to buy their own private, non-customary piece of land or find means of livelihood which detach them from their dependency on customary land.

2.2.6 How to start with few facilities?

When the urban youth informants were asked about why they have not resettled in the village after gaining rural land access, the lack of facilities that they have now gotten used to in the

urban area was one of the factors mentioned. A study from 2007 showed that household consumption in rural areas was 40 percent lower than in urban areas in Northern Uganda (Ssewanyana et al.: 21-22). A study from Bjørkhaug et al., published the same year, suggested a “desperate lack of basic social services in return areas” (p. 12). So to which extent have facilities necessary for a decent life been recovered after the war?

YU4 explained that she does not think of settling in her father’s rural land in Atiak because of its lack of facilities, like clean water sources and available food products. Furthermore, the rural area of which she belongs to has “no schools, no churches and no market”, she pointed out. The description given by YU4 of rural Atiak do not characterize a general rural environment in Northern Uganda. Sources of clean water can be found in many parts of the rural areas (Geldsdorf et al. 2012: 22-23, Salborn 2010b: 29) and small trading centers where simple food products can be bought, is a common sight in many rural places as one travels along the road. However, this becomes scarcer the more peripheral the place is positioned in relation to urban centers.

Plans exist to rebuild Northern Uganda after the destructions of the war by for instance providing more facilities which can provide services for people. The government implemented the first phase of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) from 2009 to 2012 (Evaluation and Audit Unit Technical Team 2012: 2) where the goal was to “consolidate peace and security and lay the overall foundation for recovery and development” (Interim Joint Financing Agreement 2008). Ogwang (2015) wrote that “there was a lack of adequate, timely and sustained funding for the activities drawn out of the National IDP’s Policy and the PRDP. These inadequacies, delayed the implementation of the PRDP” (p. 170). After this first phase of PRDP, allegations have been made that

...misappropriation of €11.6 million of donor funds, including €4 million of Irish Aid funds, intended for the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) [...] was fraudulently diverted to previously dormant accounts within the Office of the Prime Minister and subsequently withdrawn by various fraudulent means” (Evaluation and Audit Unit Technical Team 2012: 2).

None of my youth informants claimed to have received any resettlement support from the Ugandan government, even though a second phase of the PRDP from 2012 to 2015 has recently ended (Office of Prime Minister 2012). However, the youth informants were also not explicitly

asked about this. The key objective of the so-called PRDP 2 is to “ensure that lower level delivery facilities constructed or rehabilitated are functional” (Ibid.: ii). The second phase is not yet evaluated.

YR6 informed that people were given hoes when returning to his village. YU3 said that he knows youth who have benefitted from government efforts to empower youth in agricultural.

YU3: Like these days the government is coming up with a plan to give loans, plus some support, to youth, like to do agriculture, rare animals. A case can be; I have like a friend. He is also among the youth who are benefitting from the government project. So they received two tractors just to help them.

A study evaluating the PRDP informed that

...there is still a significant shortfall in northern Uganda’s performance against key socio-economic indicators relative to other parts of the country. The north remains the poorest region in Uganda – lagging behind in terms of income poverty as well as on social indicators (International Alert 2012: 44).

This statement does not oppose, yet it stands in contrast to the positive feedbacks given by regional officials, local government officials, civil society leaders and community members in a study done by Bertasi (2013) about the effects of the PRDP (p. 35).

Rwot Yusuf Adek claimed that the PRDP has not benefitted people in Northern Uganda in any significant manner.

Rwot Yusuf Adek: When it comes to peace talk they said everybody should go back to their land. They went back without even the resettlement package. The mediation teams, what is called the PRDP, was supposed to pay the loss to give the resettlement package which it happened to other countries. But it did not happen. Only in Uganda. Only here in Northern part of Uganda, especially only in Acholi. They don’t give you the resettlement package. From the camp you went back to your home with zero. You start from zero.

Hence, mixed reports exist about the government effort to provide recovery for Northern Uganda. The main impression given during the interviews is that people have to strive with their own few means to rebuild their lives in rural areas after displacement, even though the presence of rural resettlement support does exist with regards to improvement of infrastructure, social services and health services (Bertasi 2013: 32-33).

YR6 uttered satisfaction about the health services where he lives, even though he found the absence of an ambulance negative.

YR6: Yeah, we have access to medicine and health care, because our health center is there. We have access to that. But not only that; we have also village health team. Those ones at the grassroots. You can move like ten households, you have one. One person is there who can provide medicine. If it is too much, you come to the health center and then if it is too much they refer to the main hospital.

Even though there are evidence of such services taking place, there seems to be a need of stronger government intervention to make the process of rural resettlement smoother and more attractive to Acholi youth, particularly in peripheral areas. This impression is largely based on how rarely the informants in this study talk about being in some way personally affected by government support when discussing the resettlement process. If the government had made a meaningful impact on the resettlement of Acholi youth, it is likely that youth informants would have shared such crucial information.

In addition to weak recovery efforts from Ugandan authorities the significant loss of cattle among the Acholi people can make village life look less attractive in the eyes of Acholi youth. Not only did the cattle make Acholi people less dependent on acquiring money through day-by-day work, cattle was also used as important tools to make cultivation more efficient and village life wealthier and easier. Today manual human force is commonly used for cultivation in Northern Uganda, as stated by YR6. He claimed that the lack of cattle to assist in farming makes the work more tiresome and less profitable. At the same time, hiring cattle to dig the ground is not profitable. Such lack of tools and facilities to start livelihood activities in rural areas are likely to make transition from urban to rural lifestyle less attractive for youth.

2.3 Urban pull factors – urban advantages

Lee (1966) states that not only are people pushed to migrate because of disadvantages related to their place of origin. People also move from one place to another because of the benefits or advantages associated with the place of destination. He calls these driving forced pull factors. Youth informants mentioned several urban advantages which have pulled them to resettle in an urban place. This can increase the understanding of the current urban centralization of Acholi youth.

2.3.1 Urban/rural gap in quality of education

Even though it is unlikely that YU9 will afford to pay school fees for his children until they finish senior secondary school, he still insisted on living and earning money in town so that he can send his children to urban schools of higher educational quality. His alternative would be to send his children to schools in the rural area where his customary land is. The schools in rural areas do not receive the same funding, number of teachers and equipment as schools in urban areas. Electricity access in rural schools is often also weaker or non-existent. This does not mean that the rural schools are completely neglected by the government. In fact, most rural schools are government funded (Sandvik 2011: 18-19). The lack of qualified teachers and funds for necessary equipment bring down the quality of education significantly. Ayorekire and Twinomuhangi (2012) wrote:

Although the number of students attending secondary schools is increasing, a big challenge exists in regard to the urban–rural divide in terms of the number and quality of schools, teachers, and facilities. Most rural schools tend to (1) have limited infrastructure and teaching equipment like classrooms, laboratories, electricity, and computers; (2) attract few qualified teachers as most of them are not willing to teach in hard-to-reach rural areas; and (3) rely on untrained teachers. This rural–urban divide is reflected in the national secondary school examination results, where students in urban schools tend to perform better than those in rural schools (p. 285).

Among all my youth informants, education was perceived as something of high importance, also for the ones who have had to interrupt their studies due to lack of funding. YR7 first gave me the impression that she was contented with her life in the village and happy to again live and dig freely on her husband’s customary land after suffering in an IDP camp for many years. At a later point in the conversation she said that higher quality of education in town could make her family start to rent a place in town to secure the future of their four children. According to their plan they will commute to their customary rural land to cultivate in the weekends.

Another rural youth informant, YR6, said that he has been forced to stop his education because of lacking the financial means to continue. He taught children in his village and the parents of his pupils paid him for that job. With this extra income, which comes in addition to his income made from farming, he believed to soon have enough money to go for higher education in an urban area.

My research assistant lived in Gulu town. Because of being slightly better off, four of his children attended primary and secondary boarding school in Uganda's capital city, Kampala, a seven hours drive from Gulu. He summed up the relationship between rural/urban migration and the rural/urban gap in quality of education in Uganda.

Research assistant: You see, in the village people long for higher quality education in the nearest town. In town people long for higher quality education in Kampala. So people in the villages travel to the nearest town to study, while people in town travel to Kampala because they believe that the quality of education is higher there.

Concluding from this, perceptions among Acholi youth about the importance of quality education work as a pull factor which attracts these youth to urban places, and hence enhances urban youth migration.

2.3.2 Multiple sources of income and urban/rural commuting

Most of the youth informants who currently have rural land access did utilize their rural land in some way, even if they lived in an urban area. If the bigger portion of their time went for studies or work in town, they tried to cultivate, construct, rear animals and burn bricks on their rural land alone or together with relatives in their spare time. Both rural and urban youth informants had well thought through ambitions about how to utilize their land in the future. The privileged urban female university students engaged the least in rural profitable activities, but still they had ideas about future land utilization after completing studies.

In spite of the large number of Acholi youth residing in urban areas, many emphasized the importance of combining town and village work to accumulate wealth from as many income sources as possible. In a low income society like Uganda ensuring multiple sources of income is often crucial for personal success. Also people hired in offices are commonly seen to add onto their income by the means of petty trade, constructing houses and apartments for rent, and selling of crops in order to provide quality education for their children and a higher living standard for their family in the future. Acholi youth are no exception.

One example of this is YU3, a town youth informant. YU3 was obtaining skills from his bachelor degree program in a university in Kampala. He has a father who worked as a civil

servant while also cultivating in the village in addition to having a workshop in town. The family also had several businesses. Hence, the father afforded to pay the high university fees of his son. In spite of having fewer financial worries than majority of Acholi youth, YU3 showed great interest in utilizing the resources of his rural land. He mentioned a range of ideas that can help him secure his future financially, like assisting his father in his mechanical workshop and digging in the village in his spare time, while also extending his father's businesses together with his siblings.

YU3: In fact, I go [to the village], and as I talk now I have grown two acres of land. I have planted maize, plus other activities, like poultry rearing. I have put [up] two grass-thatched houses.

According to my research assistant, having several sources of income is more common among urban youth than rural youth, because the more peripheral their household is placed, the more youth depend on agriculture as a single source of income. If the chance of obtaining larger numbers of income sources is higher when settling in an urban place, this can partly explain why some youth prefer urban settlement.

Urban-rural commuting among Acholi youth concretely exemplifies Lee's (1966) theory that there is no either-or between the place of origin and the place of destination. The bond created between the urban and rural place can, as Lee states, enhance the person's opportunity to return to the place of origin (p. 55). To accumulate wealth in town for future land utilization was not an uncommon idea presented during the interviews with youth informants. Lee further states that economic opportunities works as a strong motivational factor in migration. The dominating number of youth informants in this study who would have preferred to live in an urban place "because there is money" [quote YR11] in town, confirm this statement.

2.3.3 Access to variations of food in town

The idea that in town "there is money" and that money provide diversity of choices, was repeated in the conversations with youth informants. Food was then mentioned as a concrete example of the freedom of multiple choices that tempted youth to settle in town. YR11 was still in secondary school and revealed that when he will finish studies and get a job, he would like to move from his rural settlement to town "because there is money" and with that money he can get what he doesn't have, "like buying food".

The appreciation of food varieties in the urban space was also emphasized by of the urban youth informant, YU8. He considered moving back to the village in the future, but was reluctant to do this because of, for instance, the limited varieties of food there. He dreamt of spreading some of the food varieties in town to the village.

YU8: From here you eat what you want. While from the village there you keep on eating the what? One food. You may be eating beans for several times, so from here when you want meat, you will eat.

2.3.4 “Getting my own land”

In the ambivalence between modern private land ownership and the traditional collective, customary land ownership, some of my youth informants confirmed that they were interested in buying their own non-customary private plot of land. They wanted to own land which is under their authority, purely.

YR6: Something of the family is not yours. It is for the family. It is not mine. I want something that I call; “it is mine”. That is why someone said: “If you are going to the white person to ask for something... to ask for aid... that: “I want you to help me with this and this”, the person will ask you: “What do you have at hand?”” So I want something that is called mine, but not ours. That is why I am trying to fight so hard to do my things, so that I also progress and become like my uncles who have built their houses in town.

YU2 repeated the same wish.

YU2: According to me, I don’t like living in the ancestral land because there could be so many quarrel[s]. There could be so many misunderstandings amongst the members.

Research assistant: Because it is a community land?

YU2: Yeah, it is a community land. So I don’t like the ancestral land so much. For me, if God gives me, I will no longer live in the ancestral land. I will just go somewhere where I can buy the land and own it personally together with my family member.

YR6’s and YU2’s perception of “my own land” reflects a growing tendency of individualization of land in Northern Uganda (Amony and Lakwo 2014: 119). However, the desire to have “my own land” may not be the only major factor explaining the move towards a more individualistic mentality. The government’s privatization and land commoditization policies and influence from foreign and western trading and media actors look to contribute to this change of mentality. It is likely that the individualization would not have been rooted to the same extent if there had been

no war and displacement. Rural, customary land among the Acholi represents the collective and its group togetherness. This collectivistic mentality was damaged by the effects of the uprooting of people from rural land during the war. At the same time individualistic mentality was given room to grow.

Hence, questions can be posed about the possibility of a future breakdown of the customary land tenure system in Northern Uganda if the interest to sell customary land and buy “my own” private, non-communal land dwells on among Acholi youth. If more land is sold, divided into smaller pieces and put under the authority of some few individuals rather than under bigger groups, like extended families and people of the same clan, the Acholi customary land tenure system can look to be under threat. This privatization of rural customary land will centralize the rural population in urban areas. If rural land access is acquired through financial means rather than by the virtue of birth, the wealthier minority is likely to marginalize the poorer rural majority by depriving them for rural livelihood opportunities. Unless they are given compensational livelihood opportunities in urban areas, this can prolong suffering among the Acholi people and youth.

It was also repeatedly expressed in the interviews with youth informants, that to own private land would release them from stress and exhaustion being imposed on them in connection to local wrangles over who is entitled to which plot of customary land.

YU4: During the time of war, many people were displaced. People left their villages and came to town, so it affected them, cause when they went back, people started fighting for land. There were land wrangles. People were fighting, relatives could come. Even someone you don't know. You have never seen before. Someone comes and claims to be your relative. She starts telling you that: “You know what? This land was left only for me, so maybe you shouldn't have that access to it.”

However, youth informants expressed that to buy a plot of private land is not an easy task for an average Acholi youth.

YU4: Buying land now is something very expensive. You think maybe youth cannot afford getting the money for buying land.

YU3 confirmed the difficulties of buying land in Gulu town during and after the war.

YU3: People were getting money on top of the money they were acquiring before the war, so some were buying lands from town here. Many as I talk are settling here permanently. They are having land titles and

many things. That is why nowadays, getting a piece of land may not be easy. If I told you, you'll get it, it may be at a high cost.

Hence, when land is of high costs, particularly in urban areas, Acholi youth face an economic barrier between the interest to own a private plot of land and the interest to live in a semi-urban or urban place. Still, the perception of the best resettlement strategy seems to be the driving force, and not necessarily the actual outcome of that strategy, when Acholi youth make decisions on where to resettle.

2.4 Rural push factors – urban disadvantages

Even though there may have been a postwar urban centralization of Acholi youth, a significant number of these youth have also resettled rurally. To acquire a comprehensive impression of what has driven these youth to settle in a rural place, rural push factors will now be looked into. When applying Lee's theory to this particular case, these push factors are urban disadvantages driving youth away from urban resettlement. The common denominator between these rural push factors was high costs associated with urban resettlement.

2.4.1 Money-based town life, unattractive renting costs and high prices of education

During and after the war, the migration to town and the creation of urban trading centers in the IDP camps led to urban expansion in Northern Uganda. This again resulted in an increasing number of constructions being built in order to host a larger amount of people. A competitive market for private purchases of urban and semi-urban land plots was created from this. At the same time, the rental market was empowered because of many people's incapacity to own land and households in town. The need among the poorest part of the population to seek shelter in town gave rise to impoverished and insanitary slums (Branch 2013: 3155-3157).

YU3: Before the war, very many people were living in the villages, but now when the war broke out they had to migrate to town, though some people they did what? They settled in IDP camps. But those who came to town, they started acquiring lands. Like from the owners they were buying lands just to seek for asylum. Just to protect their lives. Those who migrated they are not few.

After the war, efforts to house people in the urban areas were less needed because many people moved back to their rural land. Space was hence created to host people who wished to continue living in urban areas. This can have strengthened Acholi youths' opportunity to continue living

in an urban place after the war, even though several of them were given the chance to go and resettle in the villages.

Three out of the seven urban youth informants in this study reported to be renting a place to live, and eight of the youth informants claimed that renting is often a necessity in order to get a place to live in an urban place. The need to rent is often mentioned in the interviews as one of the key reasons to why youth perceive town life as money-based and expensive. The unattractive renting costs were brought up by rural youth informants when explaining why they live in the village.

YR10: In town it involves renting a place. When you are renting you will not get a space for cultivation. But here they have land. They can stay freely. They can cultivate and they feed themselves, and they can get other things also out of their land. But in town they would be renting, so there would be a lot of suffering.

In spite of the unattractive renting costs, this study found that a large number of Acholi youths have chosen to accept the unattractive renting cost in spite of its financial disadvantages. YU5 lived with her sister in Gulu town. She uttered her frustration about their need to rent a place to stay.

YU5: Actually renting is very expensive cause every month we have to be paying money to the landlord and all that and if like you have your own, it could have been very good and all that, cause every month you have to pay like around 100 [100 000 Ugandan shillings, 30 US dollar] and above for a house.

High prices of education in urban areas is another element adding to the perception of urban life as costly life. During the thirty year rule of President Museveni, policies of economic liberalization and privatization of goods and services have expanded. In the end of the 1980's and the start of the Museveni regime, the State of Uganda "abolished price controls and marketing monopolies, introduced investment incentives and downsized public sector, with the privatization of many state-owned enterprises" (Cali 2014: 3-4). This has led to an increase in price of education for Ugandan citizens.

Rwot Adek Yusuf informed about changes in financial conditions to attend secondary school that has taken place during the last two to three decades.

Rwot Adek Yusuf: The primary school was the school for the community. You start your primary school within your area as a community. But when they now left the primary school, you go to senior secondary school. Government was paying. The other government was paying feeding and accommodation in senior

secondary school. They give government blocked grants for feeding and accommodation. And in the past when you leave senior secondary school, you go to senior five, A-level, district takes you over. [The district] start paying you up to senior six. When you get the certificate for going to the university, free, you go to the university, free. You don't pay. You start even getting something called "boom", a small pocket, something for your pocket. Then now university, you pay not less than 1 200 000 [Ugandan shillings per semester with two semesters per year, 345 US dollar per semester].

Rwot Yusuf Adek said that to send one youth to secondary school will at the minimum cost demand several hundred thousands of Ugandan shillings (from 100 to 300 US dollar per term and there are three terms per school year). With such high tuition fees for only one child, an average of 6.3 births per Northern Ugandan woman and the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of around 680 US dollar per year, it can be hard for an average Ugandan to provide secondary education for his children (Chi et al. 2015: 2, World Bank 2015). A bit less than half of my youth informants said that they are unable to finish advanced level (senior five and six) of secondary school due to lack of funding. At least two youth informants had not had the chance to reach senior four yet because of its costs.

Annan et al. (2006) stated that lacking money to pay for education, particularly in senior secondary - and university level, resulted in sporadic on-and-off school attendance among youth during the time of the ceasefire (p. 26-29). To obtain higher education increases youths' chance to adapt well to the demands in the urban environment (p. 35). Their study found that "few youth [made] the transition from primary to secondary education" in 2006 (p. v).

In contrast, at least ten of the thirteen youth informants that I talked to, had finished at least three years of senior secondary school or were currently enrolled in secondary school, irrespective of their financial background, even though several of these youth had not managed to complete the last level of secondary school, advanced level, because of lack of funding. Repeatedly, it was youth with the strongest family network in town who managed to reach university level. The connection between family network and the likelihood of attending higher education, is supported by Annan et al. (2006: 43). For instance, town youth informant, YU9, who worked as a boda boda rider, informed about his incapacity to pay his children's school fees to the highest level. YU9 lost his father when he was three years old, and grew up with his mother and siblings on their rural customary land until the war displaced them from this land. He did not get a kick start in life and his children may soon be facing the consequences of this.

YU9: Even if I go home [to my rural, customary land], I will not make it. So wherever my strength now will stop is where now I will say: “I think now you children. Let us stop here”. There is nothing I can do.

These findings show that costly urban life makes the act of resettling in an urban area not an obvious choice due to its tough financial conditions.

2.5 Rural pull factors – rural advantages

In addition to high costs of living in urban places there are factors pulling youth to live on their rural land. These are advantages pulling youth to choose rural settlement. However, in spite of these rural advantages being mentioned at several occasions during the interview sessions, they did not stand out as factors determining the outcome of the most preferred place to live. Only two of the thirteen youth informants, YR10 and YR12, described rural settlement as their ideal place of settlement, even though several youth informants brought forwards positive elements of rural settlement.

2.5.1 Customary rural land as “home”, roots and the search for identity

YR12: The way I experience land; it is not like a bicycle you can go and buy anywhere. And for us in Acholi we use land as a member of that family.

In spite of the current threats against the customary land tenure system, the youth informants of this study seem to have an insight and interest for Acholi customary land and its role in their society.

YR6: The strength of the land is an Acholi, and if you want to be fed properly, you should have your land. If you want to get money, you should have your land. If you want to marry, you should have also the land in place, because you’ll show the crops. They will get good yields.

Having access to rural land was seen as a safety net in case life in town fails. YU3 emphasized this when explaining why customary land should not be sold. For instance, fear of government development interventions in connection to Gulu town soon receiving city status, has made people talk about the government’s plan to destroy homesteads in town in the near future. A home in the village is hence seen as a more stable home in contrast to risky life in town. YU2 expressed this in metaphors.

YU2: There is a saying in the language [Acholi] that a hunter goes and hunts with a dog. If a hunter goes to hunt and then the dog gets a wild animal, he will run away and come to the owner, which is the hunter, for the owner now to protect it. In other words, whatever you do, you will fall back to the ancestral home where you are actually much more guarded and you have more protection.

The importance of rural land access was also illustrated by plans of urban youth informants to go and settle in the village when they are “too old to live in town”, in search for a more quiet village life. YU3, YU8, YU9 said that to live good lives in the village they would like to spend their younger years developing their rural homesteads with profitable crops, herds of animals and constructions that can give them a future existence of less worries. Hence, youths who are now living in urban areas may return to rural areas after some decades as long as their access to rural land continues.

During the interviews it was revealed that the youth informants all had an attachment to their rural customary land in some way, even though the attachment varied in strength. Youth informants had varied perceptions about whether their home was in a rural or urban place. YU5 spoke of having two homes in the future, one urban and one rural. Ten youth informants lived their first years of life in rural areas, but four of these started living in Gulu town or other urban areas during the war. The remaining six of the ten lived in IDP camps in rural areas during parts of the war, and are characterized in this study as rural youth.

Not only rural youth saw this land as their place of belonging. Three urban youth informants, YU3, YU8 and YU9, talked of their rural land as their home. These three youths had all lived on their rural customary land during periods of their younger years. Still, YU3, a privileged urban youth had been settled in Gulu town consecutively from the age of 6 to his current age of 23. In spite of settling in an urban place from such a young age, he nevertheless defined his rural customary land in the village as his real home.

YU3: You know, when someone says like “home”, home in Acholi means “gang”. So when someone says; “in bi cero gang”, it means “are you going home”, so that “gang” it means either village or town. It can mix up, but if someone ask me: “Are you going back home?” it tunes your mind that home means “village”. It’s just like a business center. That’s town here.

This statement shows that the traditional perception of customary land as “the real home” still exists among Acholi youth. Mr. Orach confirmed that Acholi youth have not lost their interest for their roots and origin yet, because they are “longing for an identity”.

Mr. Orach: They [the youth] would approach me on the streets of Pabbo. Even in the street of Gulu town: “Please, you know about the culture. You know about our tradition. Our norms. Please”. I am always given a call: “We want to know our genealogy which these elders don’t know!” It is unfortunate that the Acholi did not document their culture, their land ownership and the rest of it wasn’t documented. So, you find them really always approaching me, because they will go to an elder. Somebody whom they respect. Somebody with grey hair. They presume he knows, but to their amusement: “Please, maybe you come next time”.

Three urban youth in this study, YU4, YU5 and YU13, would not explicitly call their rural customary land their home. Rather, they showed a stronger attachment to urban places than their rural land. YU4, for example, told me that she just recently found out from her parents that the family has a rural land in Atiak, a place of which she has no interest to go to (see 2.2.6). Common for all these three youths was that none of them had ever spent childhood years on a rural customary land. They had all lived their first years of life in urban and semi-urban areas. All of the three were females who enjoyed means to attend and live in school and university dormitories during large parts of the year. Due to the war they had been forced to live in several different places throughout their childhood. Only YU13 had been given the chance to stay settled inside the same urban area while growing up. Still, she had to move to different households several times during the war. This fluctuating movement throughout the childhood of these informants and the persistent physical distance between them and their rural land, can partly explain why they seemed to have a weaker attachment to their rural land than the other youth informants.

YU6 claimed that the youth who grew up in camp before getting the chance to know their land, did not learn about the values of the customary land to the same extent as the ones who have lived their first years of life on this land. Children who have been given the chance to live a big part of their childhood on their rural customary land, are more likely to have gotten the chance to identify with their land as their home and place of origin, according to him. They have internalized Acholi cultural norms, perceptions and values through the sitting around the bonfire, the “wang’o”. They have gotten used to life as a farmer to a larger extent and they have developed a stronger identification to their rural land, than youth who were never given the chance to spend their childhood on their customary land. This has strengthened their connection to the land and in turn their willingness to return after regaining land access, according to his perception.

Unfortunately, I did not get the chance to interview youth who had lived the first part of their childhood in an IDP camp in order to test the assumptions of YU6, but the same tendency can be seen from the example of the three female urban youth informants, who had never spent childhood years on rural customary land and seemed to possess a weaker attachment to this type of place. Even though some of the youth informants would not call their rural customary land their home, they all valued rural land access, its material value, in particular. YU13, however, expressed a connection to her customary land, which went beyond its material value, even though she had never stepped on this land in her life.

YU13: It [the customary land] means a lot to us, cause you know, our ancestral land is where our grand-grandparents were born, so that land is really important and we do value it more than these other lands in town. And whenever someone tampers with it, they can even kill you. They can even shed blood for that.

Concluding from this, the youth informants' reflections and awareness of the importance of roots, origin and identity is likely to work as a pull factor to postwar rural resettlement. If peace and stability linger on in the northern region and Acholi youth are given increased opportunities to utilize their customary rural land, as currently looks to be the case, their psychological and socio-economic attachment to this land can grow bigger, and hence increase rural youth settlement among the Acholi people.

2.5.2 Regained land access = regained freedom

YR6 expressed that many former displaced youth in particular, experienced that regaining access to rural land brought a feeling of being liberated after years locked up in IDP camps. YR6 had to live in Cope camp from the age of 11 to 16. He said that he and his family would have most likely been pushed to rent a place to live after the IDP camps were closed if their rural customary land did not exist. When renting, they would have been under the authority of the landlord. They would not have been given the chance to leave their role as what he calls "beggars", a role they were forced to play during the time in the IDP camps. Living on his own piece of land now gave him the freedom to decide how he wanted to cultivate, raise animals and plant fruit trees.

To compare regained rural land access to regained freedom adds a contrasting color to the IDP camps as a place of imprisonment where living conditions were poor. Being given the chance to provide for himself through obtaining authority over a piece of rural land seems to give him a

feeling of integrity. YR7 expressed the same feeling of integrity when she talked about her regained access of rural land after years of suffering in IDP camp “imprisonment”.

YR7: You don't know even when the food is coming [in the IDP camp]. Even they can give you which is not enough for you to feed your children, but when they brought that issue of going back home, we were happy because we knew that we are going in a free land. You live freely. Because in camp, if you wake up very early, there was a bell they ring. You have to go there and gather. They give you rules to stay in camp. All the corners you find soldiers, but within the village there is nothing. You just stay free, and that is your land. You do what you want and where. And even other areas in camp, those days when you are coming to build, you just pay for the plot where you are going to build the house. So it was so challenging, so when we went back home, we were free and even our life was just like that [free]. Even our children have enough space to play, but in camp all people were gathered together. You cannot even have enough space for your children. Even the teaching languages. You can teach your child, but when he goes to other children, maybe to play, he come back with another word. But in the villages they just follow what you tell them.

[...]

I am living in my real land. And I want to bring up my children in their real land. They have to know their land because that is *their* land. Our grannies used to tell us: “If you give birth, don't let your child out. Let him or her grow in the real land”. So my children are growing in their real land.

The freedom of escaping rental costs and be able to provide for oneself is clearly appreciated by youth. Even if it involves hard physical work, farm life represents an opportunity to be one's own master, an opportunity yearned for after a life in displacement and extreme vulnerability. This can partly explain why many Acholi youth have resettled on their rural land in the village.

2.6 Intervening obstacles

According to Lee (1966), intervening obstacles between place of origin and place of destination may arise in migration. These are elements disturbing the migrant's possibility to move between two places.

2.6.1 Costly transport between urban and rural areas

Lack of transport between urban and rural areas can be seen as an example of an intervening obstacle that hinders youth from moving between town, village trading centers and peripheral villages. Lee (1966) may have thought about one single movement over a longer distance when

writing about intervening obstacles. In the case of this research intervening obstacles are more likely to concern the prevention of urban-rural commuting to the extent that Acholi youth may wish. This was stated by YR11 and YR12. They said that if there is transport available they would prefer to live in their village and build their homestead there while commuting to town to work and accumulate money.

Rwot Yusuf Adek confirmed the difficulties that youth can face with regards to transport. He said that in order for community leaders like himself, to sensitize youth about life choices and how to rebuild the society, transport is needed. However, often the youth cannot afford the transportation costs needed for such movement.

Rwot Yusuf Adek: When somebody in Agago, you call a meeting, he don't have the money to come and the money to go. Are we now going for the meeting in Gulu? Do I have money to go for the transport? Maybe we'll come and then we get food. But what about going back? [...] Where are we going to get money? To get resources?

YU5 uttered the difficulties of accessing costly transport to her rural land.

Interviewer: So would you say that you growing up in town has weakened your access to land in any way?

YU5: No it hasn't, cause we still have the access to, only that maybe with transportation to the land is what is making us [not commute to the rural land as easily].

Part 3: Conclusion

In this thesis I look at the connection between rural land access among Acholi youth and their urban-rural social resettlement after the ceasefire between The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF). The study is largely based on interviews with 13 youths and four expert informants in North Uganda.

According to perceptions of informants of this study, postwar urban centralization of Acholi youth has persisted up until now. Informants estimated that a majority of Acholi youth have access to rural land and could have survived as farmers if they had wanted to. Despite this, 11 out of 13 youth informants preferred urban settlement for the time being. They connected urban settlement to varied and multiple income opportunities, educational opportunities and lifestyles.

This finding suggests that urban youth centralization is much due to youths' perceptions of urban advantages pulling Acholi youth to resettle in urban places.

In addition to urban advantages, it is highly likely that youths' preferences towards urban resettlement are linked to an internalization of urban life style during the war and displacement. This seem to have distanced many Acholi youth from their rural customary land, for instance through the changing mentality towards the meaning of land and wealth. Finding from the fieldwork showed a weakened connection between Acholi youth and the spiritual and cultural value that land previously represented. Additionally, informants claimed that a significant segment of Acholi youth have the interest to sell land, an attitude they were taught from life in displacement.

Hence, many Acholi youth seem to have been trapped in a limbo between tradition and modernity, placing them in between the traditional customary land tenure system and the need to preserve Acholi history and cultural identity, and an increasing tendency to privatize land putting Acholi collectivistic values under treat.

However, urban clustering of youth is not only due to its perceived urban advantages, but also rural disadvantages pushing youth to urban resettlement. According to informants, lack of rural facilities has reduced Acholi youths' chances of obtaining an attractive level of agricultural productivity. In addition, challenges connected to land conflicts, dishonesty and an unwillingness to share rural land have further limited chances of rural land utilization among many Acholi youth.

In spite of the challenges listed above, my study found that even though Acholi youths' connection to rural land is to some extent damaged by the UPDF-LRA war and the displacement of the Acholi people, the connection is far from broken. Rather, it seems to be on the road to restitution if rural land access among Acholi youth have increased to the extent which informants of this study claimed. Other factors indicating restitution is the interest among both rural and urban youth informants to develop their rural homestead in the future as they accumulate more wealth. Also rural/urban commuting is not uncommon and can enhance Acholi youths' ties to their rural land as time goes by. Some of the urban youth informants even stated that their urban stay is just temporary. Thus, blurred lines between urban and rural youth occur. Their future settlement can depend on factors like the strength of the family network in the urban place and

the viability of their financial situations. Still, urban youth centralization as an effect of war has shown itself to be long-lasting and may have taken deeper roots than what could easily be expected now that Northern Uganda has enjoyed a decade of ceasefire.

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