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South Sudan Oyee!
A Political Economy of Refugee Return Migration to Chukudum, South Sudan

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Abstract

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This dissertation delineates a political economy of refugee return migration to South Sudan by examining refugees' shifting practices of production, social reproduction and exchange, their spatialization and their intersection with various axes of difference. My work builds on theories relating geopolitics, everyday practice, and commoditization to unpack the material practices and political subjectivities engendered by refugee return migration. I trace how practices move with people and are reshaped, but only ever partially, in relation to a new context. I argue that high volume migration produces moments in which space and the authority to define its contours are renegotiated through embodied material practices. In northern Kenya, I found that Kakuma refugee camp spatializes difference by linking entitlements (to rations, environmental resources, or the authority to allow or forbid settlement and mobility) to particular social categories of people *so long* as they remain in their appropriate space. Living within this kind of space naturalizes a logic of segregation that equates authority over space and material prosperity with difference. While life in the camp lead to increasing commoditization among Didinga refugees, when they returned to the small rural town of Chukudum, most took up subsistence production as one way to navigate their exposure to reduced life chances in a floundering post-conflict economy. While subsistence production augmented local economic autonomy, access to land was mediated through notions of autochthony that reproduced some of the same exclusions that shaped camp life. Post-conflict recovery must, then, be concerned with the material and socio-spatial legacies of refugee camp life. Additionally, when subsistence production is seen as the most secure livelihood option—even for those with other sources of income—it can also be read as an indication of the extreme precarity that characterized other forms of work in post-conflict South Sudan.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------|--|
| ACF | Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger) |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| CARE | Cooperative for Relief and Assistance Everywhere |
| CBO | Community Based Organization |
| CDS | Christian Development Service |
| CPA | Comprehensive Peace Agreement |
| GAM | Global Acute Malnutrition |
| GOS | Government of Sudan |
| GoSS | Government of South Sudan |
| GTZ/GIZ | German Agency for Technical Cooperation |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| INGO | International Non-Government Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| IRIN | Integrated Regional Information Networks |
| KSh | Kenyan Shilling |
| LRA | Lord's Resistance Army |
| NCA | Norwegian Church Aid |
| NCCCK | National Council of Churches Kenya |
| NGO | Non-Government Organization |
| PHC | Primary Health Center |
| PHU | Primary Health Unit |
| ROSS | Republic of South Sudan |
| SAF | Sudan Armed Forces |
| SDG | Sudanese Pound (pre-2011) |
| SPLA | Sudan People's Liberation Army |
| SPLA/Nasir | Akol & Machar faction during the 1991 split in the SPLA |
| SPLA/Torit | Garang faction during the 1991 split in the SPLA |
| SPLM/A | Sudan People's Liberation Movement & Army |
| SPLM | Sudan People's Liberation Movement (Political Party) |
| SSRRC | South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VAR | Voluntary Assisted Return |
| WFP | World Food Program |
| UXO | Unexploded Ordinance |

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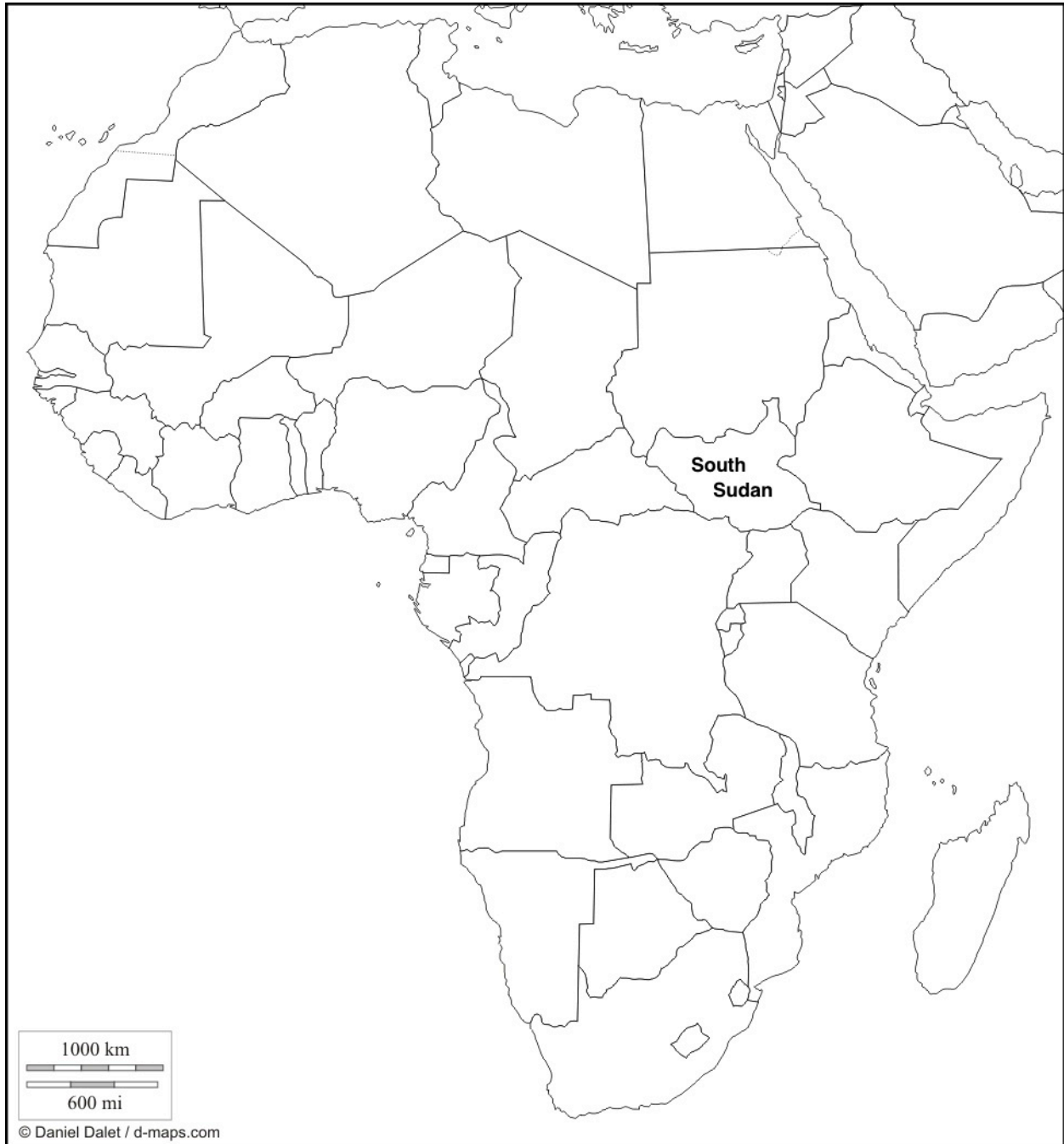
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This dissertation is dedicated to
Anjelika
&
Anita
and to those I always imagined I would see again



Map 1: South Sudan in Africa
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INTRODUCTION

SOUTH SUDAN, OYEE!



Independence Day Celebrations in Chukudum July 9th 2011
Photo: Léonie Newhouse



Figure 1: Images from the referendum ballot.

INTRODUCTION

On July 9 2011, South Sudan waved an emphatic goodbye to Khartoum. Six and a half years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in 2005, the transitional interim period came to a close with South Sudan's secession from the north. In the

capital Juba, dignitaries from around the world, including many African heads of state, gathered to celebrate the birth of the world's newest nation-state, while people in villages and towns across the country gathered to mark the historic day with speech making, dancing, and feasting.

The week prior to independence, I, too, made my way to South Sudan. I was traveling from Kakuma Refugee camp to the small South Sudanese town that is at the center of this dissertation project. On the road from the dusty Kenyan border town of Lokichoggio, I encountered a steady flow of people all rushing to be 'there' for the momentous and historic day. The cost of travel into South Sudan had risen steadily in the run-up to independence, more than doubling from the previous month, as business savvy taxi operators took advantage of the increased demand for seats. Indeed, at the taxi stand that was the staging area for trips across the border into South Sudan, arguments broke out over who would claim seats in the next collective taxi to leave, while aggressive touts grabbed hold of travelers' luggage in an attempt to secure their fare. Those traveling to the west bank of the Nile were particularly anxious to get moving—the government had just announced that within a couple of days all traffic into the capital Juba would be restricted, blocking access to the country's only bridge over the Nile and effectively barring any travel to points further afield.

Over the long transitional period, many South Sudanese had feared that some event might take place that would result in a decision to postpone independence, a cautious cynicism that reflects a long history of political disappointments. Their skepticism was confirmed by the failure of both parties to meet nearly all of the important benchmarks leading up to the referendum.² So, as the date of July 9th approached and it became ever more clear that nothing would delay secession, the sense of excitement among South Sudanese grew palpable. Everyone I met along my journey seemed eager to comment and converse with fellow travelers about the coming of independence. Some

² These benchmarks include the completion of a national population census (scheduled to begin in July 2006, actually conducted between April 22 and May 5, 2008) and national elections (scheduled to be held before July 9, 2009 and eventually undertaken from April 11-15 2010).

recounted where they cast their referendum vote, or how long it had been since they had been 'home' and seen parents, brothers or sisters. Others discussed plans for the big day, the impact and effectiveness of security precautions to protect against any attempts by the north to mar the day, and who might attend the ceremony in Juba. "Will President Obama be there?" and "Shouldn't the police arrest Al Bashir and send him to The Hague when he touches down in Juba?" were just two of the speculative comments I overheard. Most of all, the South Sudanese people I encountered on that trip pondered what independence might mean for themselves, their families and the future of their country-to-be.

The rush to celebrate independence in South Sudan was only the most recent stage of a more general influx of people into South Sudan that began with the end of open hostilities between the SPLA and Khartoum more than six years earlier. The independence tourists—most of them temporary visitors—traveled along routes that had been forged by well over 2 million displaced South Sudanese who have returned to villages, towns and cities since 2005, not just to visit, but to begin the long process of reconstructing their homes, lives, and livelihoods.³ From the earliest days of peace negotiations, the fate of the more than 5 million people displaced by the conflict (both internally and across international borders) has been seen as a critical issue that had the potential to impact the sustainability of the CPA. The attention to returnees—by the administrations in Khartoum and Juba, the humanitarian sector and neighboring governments—was rooted both in the logistical challenges of assisting and accommodating so many people on the move on one hand, and on the other, the politicized desire (on the part of returnees and political elite) for Southerners to

³ The exact number of returnees between the signing of the CPA in January 2005 and independence in July 2012 is impossible to verify, as data collection procedures, monitoring strategies and coverage rates varied across time and location. Additionally, various international organizations, government and UN agencies report wildly varying numbers. A report by the government's Assessment and Evaluation Commission puts the number of returnees (both refugees and IDPs) at 2 million by July 2008. While the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates the number of internally displaced people (returning refugees are not included in this number) who returned to their area of origin (mostly from Khartoum and other northern cities) between 01/05 and 12/09 alone to be nearly 1.9 million. Similar data from UNHCR put the number of repatriating refugees at 330,000 as of May 2010 (Pantuliano & Fenton, 2010).

return to participate in the recovery of their nation-to-be, not least of which by voting for independence during the referendum.⁴ Even after independence, the negotiations over the legal status of Southerners living in the North remain unresolved, keeping return migration in the political spotlight. It is clear is that displaced people and the questions raised by their return have played, and will continue to place a critical role in the politics of post-conflict South Sudan.

My dissertation research is guided by concern about what such a significant population movement might mean for those living in a struggling economy seeking to recover from more than five decades of violent conflict and underdevelopment. How could this place accommodate the large number of people returning—and the unbounded sense of hope for the future that they have invested in the promise of independence? How have displaced people and their everyday practices changed in the decades spent in exile? What might this mean for the communities to which they return, and to those that remained in South Sudan for the duration of the conflict? I explore these questions as they relate to Chukudum, a small town in southeastern South Sudan that was nearly emptied of its residents during the conflict, and to the town's Didinga diaspora living across the Kenyan border in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

My concerns in this dissertation are two-fold. My primary objective is to delineate a political economy of refugee return migration by examining refugees' shifting practices of production, social reproduction and exchange, their spatialization and their intersection with various axes of difference. To do so, I mobilize the concept of precarity to explore how decisions around labor are shaped by a volatile local economy. As a concept, precarity offers a new lens to think *through* labor in context in which opportunities to engage in socially valued work are scarce. In Chukudum, subsistence

⁴ In April 2008, the Semi-Autonomous Government of South Sudan sought to delay the national census, protesting that many Southerners displaced to the north during the two-decade long conflict had not had the opportunity to return to the south. As a result they would not be properly counted as southerners—affecting wealth sharing agreements, the 2009 national election, and most importantly the 2011 referendum on independence for the South. (South Sudan Blocks Census over Ethnicity, Religion,⁷ April 13, 2008; available at borglobe.com)

production emerged as a way for town residents to navigate their exposure to reduced life chances in a manner that augmented local economic autonomy. When subsistence production is seen as the most secure livelihood option—even for those with other sources of income—it can also be read as an indication of the extreme precarity that characterized other forms of work in post-conflict South Sudan. So while return migration lead to a general increase in commoditized exchanges in Chukudum, subsistence production remained a necessary foundation of the local economy.

Secondly, I am interested in the production of space more generally, which I see as occurring through embodied material practices. Examining return migration as it unfolds provides a unique opportunity to see both the re-working of practices and their potential for redefining space (Hammond, 2004; Tuathail, 2010). I found that high volume migration produces moments in which space and the authority to define its contours are renegotiated through embodied material practices. Refugee camps spatialize difference by linking entitlements (to rations, environmental resources, or the authority to allow or forbid settlement and mobility) to particular social categories of people *so long* as they remain in their appropriate space. Understanding the practices and subjectivities that refugee camps produce is so critical because living within this kind of space naturalizes a logic of segregation that equates authority over space and material prosperity with difference. This matters because, when the wars that produced displacements end, the majority of refugees eventually return to their areas or countries of origin. As places recovering from violent conflict, the tendency to spatialize difference has the potential to spark renewed (and potentially violent) contestations over the authority to determine the social regulation of space or sets of material practice. An understanding of post-conflict recovery must, then, also be concerned with the material and socio-spatial legacies of refugee camp life. The interstitial moments in which practices, politics and space are up for grabs offer an opportunity to more clearly comprehend the processes by which new practices and spaces are co-produced.

Throughout the dissertation, these I work back and forth across these two themes. Doing so provides a nuanced picture of the dialectical relationship between material practices and the production of space (Soja, 1980). In choosing to foreground the everyday practices of production and social reproduction, I follow a number of contemporary geographers and anthropologists who called attention to the wider importance of seemingly banal practices to understanding broader social, political and economic processes (Brody, 2006; Katz, 2004; Reeves, 2011; Sharp, 2011; R. J. Smith, 2011). In exploring the questions outlined above, my research crosses scales to link global geopolitics with embodied practice (Fluri, 2009; Hyndman, 2000; 2010a; Mountz, 2010; Mountz & Hyndman, 2006; Sparke, 2006). My work builds on theories relating geopolitics, everyday practice, and commoditization to unpack the material practices and political subjectivities engendered by refugee return migration. I trace how practices move with people and are reshaped, but only ever partially, in relation to a new context. Building on the French school of critical social theory, I look at the ways in which shifts in material social relations are also necessarily reflected in everyday practices (Bourdieu, 1977; Lefebvre & Rabinovitch, 2000). Arguing against unidirectional analyses that document the ever increasing insertion of marginal places into global capitalist modes of production, I look at return migration as a moment of disarticulation from an expansive global capitalism (Bair & Werner, 2011), and resuscitate an appreciation of subsistence production in a diverse economy (Gibson-Graham, 1996; 2008)

SPACE AND PRACTICE

In this dissertation I give an account of displacement from and return migration to a small, rather marginal town in South Sudan. Undertaken in the period leading up to South Sudan's secession from the North, the research offers a glimpse into a time of momentous social, political and material transition. I do so through an ethnographic account of everyday spaces and practices of displacement and return migration. This question—that of the relationship between space and

practice—has long been one of the central concerns of contemporary geography (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Soja, 1980), and has considerable political import. While these authors vary in the way they have approached this topic, all have considered the re-theorization of space necessary to the development of a more productive, active understanding of politics—a politics which is radically open to change (Massey, 2005).

Much of the discussions of space in contemporary geography take Henri Lefebvre's seminal work *The Production of Space* (1991) as a point of departure. Lefebvre profoundly shifted scholarly attention to space by arguing that space is socially produced. For Lefebvre space is simultaneously the material space of practices, representations of space (space as conceived of by planners and social engineers), and representational spaces (which exceed these other senses of space in that they enlist imaginative speculations about what might be). The insight of this conceptualization of space is in the way that it encompasses the materiality of space, the power of discourses to define and limit our experience of space and the role of hegemonic social formations in reproducing dominance through these. Lefebvre called for a new approach to the study of space, one that is attentive to the *processes* through which it is produced rather than one based on analyses of what happens 'in' space:

A comparable approach (to that of Marx) is called for today, an approach which would analyse not things in space, but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relations embedded in it. The dominant tendency fragments space and cuts it into pieces. It enumerates the things, the various objects that space contains...It bases its image of the forces occupying space on the idea that space is a passive receptacle. Thus instead of uncovering the social relationships...that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relations inherent to it...we fall into the trap of treating space as space 'in itself,' as space as such.

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 89)

The approach to the study of space that Lefebvre advocates in this passage has had significant impact on much subsequent geographic scholarship. It has also informed the approach I take in this dissertation, one that is attentive to material practices and sensitive to the processes through which space is produced socially.

Yet while I appreciate his dialectical approach to analyzing space, Lefebvre's work is also limited by his particular political project of coming to terms with the potential for radical social change in urban life under advanced capitalism. His analysis is unnecessarily bound up with this point of departure. Aside from the proclamation that "every society produces a space, its own space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 53) Lefebvre has little to say about the production of non- or semi-capitalist spaces in the present (as opposed pre-capitalist spaces temporally relegated to the past). In *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991), modernity is repeatedly equated with advanced capitalism in the West, and the spaces produced by these processes are held out as the only spaces appropriate for study:

Much as they might like to, anthropologists cannot hide from the fact that the space and tendencies of modernity (i.e. modern capitalism) will never be discovered in either Kenya or among French or any other peasants. To put studies such as these as of great importance in this connection is to avoid reality, to sabotage the search for knowledge and to turn one's back on the actual 'problematic' of space.

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 123)

Clearly, I find this statement untenable. Lefebvre's insistence on relating the production of space to the emergence of modernity displays a profound and problematic euro-centrism and reproduces the temporalization of difference that Massey (2005), among others, finds so problematic. Similarly, the view of societies as bounded entities producing their own spaces fails to take into account the complex interrelations between societies and modes of production at a variety of scales. Clearly, Kenyan peasants pushed off their land to make way for tea plantations producing for the export market are just as implicated in the production of capitalist space as are the consumers of that tea living in Paris, though of course, the contours of these spaces may differ considerably.

The work of geographer David Harvey addresses just this gap in Lefebvre's thought by seeking to elucidate the dynamic and connected nature of the spaces of global capitalism. Taking a slightly different view of space, Harvey, too, seeks to understand the critical role of space in the reproduction of capitalism. But where Lefebvre places considerable emphasis on the practices (in

particular practices of consumption) through which space is produced and reproduced in everyday life, Harvey focuses more squarely on the spatial dynamics of capitalist accumulation.⁵ He sketches out a theory of necessarily uneven geographic development under an expansionary capitalism. Harvey identifies a central tension in capitalism where on one hand there is a need to fix capital in the land to facilitate movements across space, and on the other hand constant competition means that these fixed investments are superseded and must be destroyed to make way for new opportunities for accumulation (Harvey, 2005, p. 100).

Harvey's work often highlights connections that reach across spaces and scales. Though he foregrounds the materiality of these changes in space, Harvey is attentive also to the interplay between the material practices, discourses and ideologies that together produce capitalist space. Throughout his work, Harvey identifies three distinct frames through which space has been conceptualized—absolute space, relative space, and relational space (Harvey, 2006, p. 121). Rather than elevating one of these concepts, Harvey argues that it is more productive to hold them in tension, as each frame will reveal some aspect of any given space. In an example of this technique, he rereads Marx through a spatial lens:

“Everything that pertains to use value lies in the province of absolute space and time...Every thing that pertains to exchange value lies in relative space-time because exchange entails movements of commodities, money, capital, labor power and people over space and time. It is the circulation, the perpetual motion that counts. Exchange, as Marx observes, therefore breaks through all barriers of space and time. It perpetually reshapes the coordinates within which we live our daily lives...The circulation and accumulation of capital occurs in relative space-time. Value is, however, a relational concept. Its referent is, therefore, relational space-time...Value is, in short, a social relation. As such, it is impossible to measure except by way of its effects.

(Harvey, 2006) p. 141}

Harvey's work is distinctly Gramscian, in that it is concerned with the ways in which the processes of capital accumulation are mediated through discursive practices and other forms of common sense

⁵ Mass consumption plays a key role in Lefebvre's understanding of both space and the everyday. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

(Harvey 2006: 84). This vein of analysis can be radically relational, in that it highlights the lines of connection between, for example, geopolitics, nature, and neoliberalism. However, Harvey is keen to ground the relational in material space. He argues: that “[i]t is only when relationality connects to the absolute spaces and times of social and material life that politics comes alive” (Harvey, 2006, p. 148).

Yet, despite this insistence on grounding theory in social and material life, Harvey’s writings are often populated by disembodied processes rather than the materiality of actual lives and embodied practices that are implicated in these processes. Additionally, Harvey displays at best a lack of interest or at worst a misapprehension of the radical potential of relationality as developed in feminist political thought. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005) puts relationality at the center of her attempt to reinvigorate our conception of space through critique. She advances three propositions, which though reflective of Lefebvre’s focus on the production of space, pushes further to highlight the political challenge of space

“It is easiest to begin by boiling it down to a few propositions. They are the following. *First*, that we recognize space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny...*Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of the contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality...*Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed.”

(Massey, 2005, p. 11)

Massey’s project is to re-examine and expunge a variety of connotations that adhere to ‘space’ which unacceptably limit an ability to apprehend the multiplicity and openness of space, and so prove to be “inadequate to face up to the challenges of space” (Massey, 2005, p. 8). In particular she takes aim at conceptualizations that see space as static in contrast to an assumed dynamism of time, as she see

this move as a fundamental depoliticization of the possibilities inherent in space. By thinking of space relationally, Massey argues, we are enabled to apprehend (and perhaps address):

...the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness—and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others...

(Massey, 2005, p. 195)

The possibilities inherent in re-thinking space relationally emerge in the enactment of a politics built on a recognition of constitutive interrelatedness and radical multiplicity. What Massey's work brings to an analysis of space is an appreciation of multiplicity that is not measured in terms of (or against) western capitalism. Rather, in Massey's view the challenge of space is a contemporaneous plurality that is ultimately irreducible to totalizing explanatory logics (such as capitalism). This is a post-colonial reading of space, in that is adamant in building a "fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others, with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell."

However productive these reconceptualizations are for the way we think about space, they leave unanswered the question of just how to mobilize theories of space in relation to everyday social life. For me, theory is only useful insofar as it helps us to understand, analyze, critique—and perhaps to change—material social life.

To meet the challenges of space it is not only necessary to think space relationally, but also to excavate its production through an attention to embodied material practices. An understanding of broader social and spatial processes can only be arrived at through an examination of the specificity of everyday life, in what anthropologist Katharine Rankin (2004) has called a practice-theoretical approach. She writes:

In a practice-theory framework, then, these methods and scalar priorities generate empirically detailed accounts of ideology as part of everyday life—accounts of the cultural work entailed in enforcing and legitimating established norms and values, in routine daily experience as much as in public rituals like marriages or independence day celebrations...[Such an approach] considers how these forms of cultural production can assume hegemonic proportions and achieve a strong grip on people's

common sense by detailing their ‘habitus’—their practical modes of consent and collusion.

(Rankin, 2004, p. 55)

Rankin develops her ideas in conversation with geographers who have sought ways to connect everyday life to broader social processes such as globalization. Geographers, she argues, are better equipped to attend to the multi-scalar processes that shape and are shaped by everyday practices in peripheral places (Rankin, 2004, p. 68). Combining ethnographic sensibilities with a desire to connect her analysis to more global processes, geographer Cindi Katz (2001a; 2001b) convincingly argues for what she labels a topographical approach. Topography, she argues, is a way of capturing the relationality of space without effacing the particularity of specific histories and geographies. She argues:

Topographical analysis provides the wherewithal to critically assess these processes through scrutiny of the abrasions and solidarities they simultaneously make and alter between the material social practices through which place is made, and the social and political-economic relations embedded in space.

(Katz, 2001b, p. 722)

Material practices and the social meanings that are embodied through them are necessarily at the center of this kind of analysis. I embrace Katz’s topographical approach to the study of space, which implies the kind of empirically rich understanding of everyday life gained through ethnographic research.

PRECARITY AND DIVERSE ECONOMIES

While this dissertation is a meditation on the production of space, it is at the same time a political economy of refugee return migration. By linking these two frames of analysis, I seek to develop an understanding of the set of material practices that defined the contours of space and everyday life in Chukudum in relation to those that did the same in Kakuma. To do so I focus on choices around labor, subsistence and commodity production to give a nuanced picture of the economy that goes beyond facile distinctions between production and social reproduction. In

Chukudum, the extreme precarity that characterized waged work and livelihoods relying exclusively on petty commodity production meant that subsistence production and non-capitalist modes of mobilizing labor were at the center of town residents strategies to achieve basic sustenance and their struggles to thrive. My work contributes to Gibson-Graham's call for scholars to reread the "economy" in ways that recognize the multiplicity of non-capitalist economic relations that so often coexists within, along side or outside capitalisms.

In geography, there has been increasing interest in destabilizing narratives of an expansive and triumphant capitalism. One approach has been to draw attention the spaces and people which have been excluded or abandoned by capital (Bair & Werner, 2011; Faier, 2011; Li, 2010; 2011; Ramamurthy, 2011; Wright, 2006; 2011 among others). Harvey's work on the 'spatial fix' under capitalism has been foundational in this respect, as it elaborates the ways in which capitalist crises produce spaces where assets, resources and labor are devalued to make way for renewed accumulation (Harvey, 1973; 2005; 2006). Despite the agility of the concept of the spatial fix to describe diverse instances of devaluation, several scholars point out that Harvey's work tells us little about *whose* labor in *which* places will come to be devalued, or what this means for those affected by these periodic devaluations.

Recently, Bair and Werner (2011) have proposed 'disarticulation' as a concept that gets at the process by which particular places are de-linked from circuits of capital accumulation. Developed in relation to scholarship on commodity chain analysis, they argue that the term disarticulation connects a politics of disinvestment to place and subject making processes that provide the conditions of possibility for renewed capitalist production. Going beyond Harvey's tendency to focus on macro-level moments of crisis, Bair & Werner (2011) argue that an attention to everyday practices does more to shed light on the process through which particular places and resources are devalued by capital:

... in contrast to Harvey's formulation linking dispossession to moments of crisis, the contours of capital accumulation and those people and places provisionally externalized from its relations are best understood through everyday practices and struggles over value. Processes of devaluation, for example, are an inherent dynamic of capitalism, but they cannot be reduced to the logic of capital. For one thing, capital alone does not determine whose labor will be exploited and where. The availability of labor and its differential valuation are inseparable from constructions of social difference based on interlocking and overdetermined hierarchies of race, gender, nation, and class.

(Bair & Werner, 2011, p. 991)

Building on the meaning of articulation forwarded by Stuart Hall (1980), disarticulation is attentive not only to the kinds of crises of devaluation described by Harvey, but also to the ways in which these moments of disconnection are always contingent on social categories of difference:

It is not only the work of linking up constructions of social difference with processes of valuation and capital accumulation, but also that of reproducing geographical difference by linking and delinking places to commodity chains that are formed and reformed through these moments of connection and severance.

(Bair & Werner, 2011, p. 991)

Disarticulation, thus, describes the process through which the devaluation of particular places is linked into the production of social difference. As mentioned earlier, in Kakuma, spatialized categories of difference linked particular people to particular entitlements. In effect, the refugee camp acted as a socio-spatial technology through which both host and refugee populations came to be tethered to a global and local economy. For these refugees, returning to Chukudum meant a disarticulation from philanthro-capitalist modes of assistance.

Yet while disarticulation takes seriously the question of what kinds of places and practices come to be externalized from capitalism and so devalued, it does not fully decenter an expansive capitalism in its analysis. Disarticulation still defines people, practices and places with respect to their relation—i.e. internal or external—to capitalism. JK Gibson-Graham (1996) argue that such a discursive move re-inscribes capitalocentric discourses of the economy in ways that inhibit a recognition of a multiplicity of non-capitalist economic practices. They propose new language with

which to apprehend and describe a variety of economic activities. Gibson-Graham argue for the need to recognize non-capitalist economic activities for what they are: as always existing along side capitalism. On their view, the tendency to label these practices as non-productive, or to define them as social reproduction discursively captures a wide variety of economic activity within the logic of capitalism. Instead, they argue for a discursive intervention that recognizes the diversity of economic activity. They delineate, for example, a variety of transactions in which exchange does not follow the logic of commensurability that is at the center of capitalist exchange:

Formal market exchange, in which calculations of commensurability and thus “rules” of exchange are believed by mainstream economists to abide by immutable laws, accounts for only one subset of transactions that circulate the goods and services that support livelihoods. Perhaps the most prevalent form of exchange is the huge variety and volume of *nonmarket* transactions that sustain us all. Goods and services are produced and *shared* in the household, nature provides abundant goods that are *taken* as well as stewarded, people and organizations *give away* goods and services, some people rightfully or illegally *steal* goods, taxes and property are *appropriated* and goods and services are *allocated* by the state, and goods and services are traded within and between community according to traditions of *ritual exchange*. In these transactions there are no rules of commensurability and there may be no formal calculation of how much is shared, taken, given away, stolen, or allocated, but cultural rules and norms are reflected in how these transactions are conducted.

(Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 60-1)

Unlike many of the other concepts used to describe the effects of becoming disconnected from an expansive global capitalism which tend to focus exclusively on the (very real) dire consequences for those whose labor has been devalued, Gibson Graham’s intervention allows for a more complicated reading that recognizes that value can be created outside of capitalist production. They also recognize that most often, the people and places implicated these kinds of devaluations do not face a clear cut transition from their inclusion within and strategic abandonment by capital, but rather some unique combination of the two. For this reason they propose a weak theory of the economy that is attentive to the interaction between capitalist and non-capitalist economies:

A weak theory of the economy does not presume that relationships between distinct sites of the diverse economy are structured in predictable ways, but observes the ways

they are always differently produced according to specific geographies, histories, and ethical practices.

(Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 71)

In my research, the return of refugees to Chukudum also meant transiting across variously configured engagements with diverse economies. In contrast to scholars who view disarticulation as merely the expulsion or devaluation of localized labor power and resources, non-capitalist production in Chukudum was a way to increase the value of labor and resources. Subsistence production and various non-capitalist modes of mobilizing labor and distributing surplus were adopted to increase familial and local autonomy and as a corrective to town resident's subordinate incorporation into the flexibilized labor regimes that characterized work in the broader South Sudanese economy.

PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation consists of three main parts. In *Part I*, I provide the theoretical, methodological and historical context for the study. This is followed by two sets of paired empirical chapters (*Part II* and *Part III*) that present the empirical content of the dissertation. *Part II* focuses on an analysis of Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya, while *Part III* centers on Chukudum, a small town in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan. The two parts are meant to mirror each other to draw attention to the main theoretical claims about the relationship between space and material practice, and to allow for a comparative reading of these processes of co-production across location. The first chapter in each pair examines the social production of space in each location, while the second chapter focuses more squarely on a political economic analysis of everyday practices and draws more heavily from my ethnographic data.

Part I

This introduction has laid out my main theoretical framings that provide the foundation on which I build an analysis of the everyday negotiations of return migration in a small town in South Sudan. The first chapter (Chapter 1) outlines my research philosophy, methodological concerns and the limitations of the study. It also provides a brief history of South Sudan, as well as a more detailed account of the various displacements from Chukudum, my primary field site.

Part II

Chapter 2 is the first of two chapters that discuss life for Didinga from Chukudum living in Kakuma Refugee Camp, located not far from the South Sudanese border in northern Kenya. It begins with a brief historical account of the creation of the refugee camp at Kakuma and its relation to the pre-existing town and local population. The chapter then considers the nature of the spatial technology of the camp, and questions the traction of Agamben's notion of 'space of exception' in light of a more ethnographic approach to theory building (Agamben, 1998; 2005). Through empirically grounded argument, I examine the ways in which the spatiality of the camp are maintained through the practices of humanitarian organizations, host populations and refugees themselves. I explore the material aspect of these practices and show that rather than seeing the camp as a set of reciprocal exclusions that segregate refugees from host populations and humanitarian workers it is more productive to explore how these exclusions draw the various communities into interaction, producing a space of interconnection and exchange.

In the next chapter (Chapter 3), I explore in more detail the contours of these interconnections and exchanges by focusing in on the practices of production, social reproduction and exchange that make up everyday life for Didinga refugees in Kakuma. The chapter opens with an extended description of a typical day in Kakuma, and goes on to pull out particular moments of this day for more close analysis. I first examine the habits of habits of consumption and exchange relating these back to the spatialization of difference and entitlements explored in the previous

chapter. I follow this with an analysis of women's petty commodity production that is attentive to shifting ideas around value and labor.

Part III

Part three marks a change in perspective, as the focus of the dissertation falls more squarely on return migration to Chukudum. Following the pattern of analysis Part II, Chapter 4 examines the impact of return migration on the social regulation of space in Chukudum. It starts with a critique of the ways in which the political economy of conflict has been considered, and argues for the usefulness of thinking of conflict economies as frontier spaces, in which various actors contest who has the authority to determine access to resources. The chapter then documents the creation of a frontier economy in Chukudum during 1990s and identifies key events that created the conditions of possibility that allowed Didinga residents to reclaim authority from the soldier-traders who rose to economic dominance during the conflict. The majority of the chapter explores the critical role of return migration in the success of Didinga efforts to re-assert their right to control settlement and access to resources on their land. The chapter closes with an analysis of the ways in which the social regulation of space in Chukudum—effected through discursive, material, and occasionally violent practices—Chukudum produced its own set of spatial exclusions.

Building on the analysis of the social regulation of space developed in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 takes up the decisions, practices and micro-encounters that make up the everyday struggles for life, livelihood and survival by residents of Chukudum. The chapter weaves together theory building, ethnographic vignettes, and analysis to illuminate the considerable constraints that weigh on residents' efforts to strike a balance between subsistence agriculture, pastoral livestock production, petty commodity production, trade and wage labor. Bringing together critical and feminist readings of labor, production and social reproduction, the chapter reads the enduring nature of subsistence

production against the acute precarity of other livelihood options available to town residents. The dissertation closes with a brief concluding chapter (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY



Didinga Hills near Camp 15
Photo: Philip Lokio Lokiru

PRECARITY AND AN EMBODIED ETHIC OF ENCOUNTER

That day, when I haggled with taxi drivers on the Kenyan border to arrange transport into South Sudan ahead of independence, I rehearsed the coming journey in my mind. Unlike some of my fellow travelers that day, I undertook a now familiar journey—making good on a commitment I made when I left: my promise to return. I could easily picture the journey. From Loki we would head to the border crossing at Nadapal. Not long after that the short desert scrub grass gives way to the two meter high grasses that let me know I am back in the South Sudanese savanna. With any

luck we could make it to Kapoeta before noon. From Kapoeta we would head east to Camp 15, where knobby granite peaks brood over the dust-covered shops that lined the highway. The silhouette of those peaks against the sky is inscribed in my soul—a striking visual welcome to the Didinga hills that never fails to touch an emotional chord. Just on from there, on the other side of the barracks lays the treacherous road that branches to Chukudum. However, if there were any delays at the border, or if some of the passengers disembarked at Narus, we wouldn't get to Kapoeta until late afternoon. That would mean spending the night there and catching an early direct ride to Chukudum. Experience had taught me not to try to push on to Chukudum in the afternoon, especially in the rainy season. The road is infamous, both for its tendency to turn to liquid at the slightest rain and for the frequency of vehicle ambushes that continue to occur there. I had allowed myself several days of traveling time ahead of independence, just in case.

Each time I make the journey to Chukudum, I am reminded of the precariousness of my own existence. Dangers come from all quarters: the river that swells to prevent crossing, the malarial mosquitos that feast on me as I wait for the waters to recede, and the road itself, whose ruts and washouts lay claim to countless lives and vehicles. My voyage depends also on the nervous Kenyan driver who is wavering on the edge of abandoning his passengers at Camp 15 to avoid the most dangerous leg of the journey, on the willingness of fellow travelers to push and dig the vehicle out of bad patches,⁶ and on the decision of unknown others who determine which vehicles to target in ambushes. My survival relies also on the care and attention of others who drag me to the hospital when I become sick, and who sustain me daily with food, conversation, and most importantly friendship. Travel to Chukudum is always vexing—it lays bare the terrible vulnerability of my body

⁶ A fellow traveler once offered me this sage advice “This is a good vehicle to travel with, there is a good balance.” When I asked him to clarify he responded, “It is not good to travel with only women and their children, what will happen if you become stuck? Who will be there to push? It is better to have some young men along.”

to harm, and to desire and also to the ethical claims of others. As feminist theorist and political philosopher Judith Butler writes:

The precarity of life imposes an obligation on us. We have to ask about the conditions under which it becomes possible to apprehend a life or set of lives as precarious, and to those that make it less possible, or indeed impossible...And yet, I want to argue that if we are to make broader social and political claims about rights to protection entitlements to persistence and flourishing, we will first have to be supported by a new bodily ontology, one that implies rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependency, exposure, bodily persistence, desire, work and the claims of language and social belonging.

(Butler, 2009, p. 2)

For Butler, it is the violability of the body, our exposure to the desires and violences of others (and indeed our own bodily capacity for both) that conditions our apprehension as human. As a social ontology that recognizes our inherent dependency on others and their dependency on us, it implies also an obligation to ensure the conditions of life that sustain others and allow them to flourish.

I open this chapter with Butler's insistence on a new bodily ontology not (only) to reflect on the profound ways in which I experienced my own vulnerability in the conduct of this research, but because her thinking on the body helps to flesh out the basis of the interrelatedness on which Massey pins her hopes for the political possibility of space. In also sheds light on the political and ethical commitments that have informed my study. In her work, Butler juxtaposes

...precariousness as a shared condition, and precarity as the politically induced condition that would deny equal exposure through the radically unequal distribution of wealth and the differential ways of exposing certain populations, racially and nationally conceptualized, to greater violence.

(Butler, 2009, p. 28)

My research has been shaped by a desire to make legible (at least in some small way) the ways in which certain populations—in this case refugees and returnees—are made to suffer increased exposure to poverty, disease and violence. For me, this implies also a politics of knowledge production that recognizes the *political* nature of precarity—not only through the acts of writing and

analysis, *but also* through an embodied conduct of research based in an embrace of the researcher's own bodily precariousness.

What do I mean by this? I mean something akin to what feminist geographer Jennifer Hyndman (2010b) has called a *post-foundational ethic of encounter*, which is generative of “more embodied ways of seeing and doing politics on the ground.” Clearly this is not just a scholarly endeavor; rather it is an approach that offers a *praxis* of encounter that holds out the possibility of political engagement, one that does not presuppose a liberal universalism. As Hyndman argues:

Critical geopolitics can avoid a humanist commitment to prefigured subjects and normative positions by using the human body's vulnerability to violence as a basis to materialize a non-foundational ethic of encounter that engages ‘the political’... It [critical geopolitics] is a space for the production of less chauvinistic, and hopefully nonviolent universalisms that do not come with pre-given content, political values, and prescribed outcomes, but that attend to context, history, and vulnerability to violence.

(Hyndman, 2010b, p. 254)

Such an ethic of encounter operates at different scales—the *political* condenses in the relational subject positions between researcher, participants, representations and audiences. More than a methodology, an ethic of encounter is a praxis of both knowledge production and representation. But it extends further to encompass the ways in which each of us is exposed in the face of countless others, both proximate and distant. In the conduct of research as well as in the process of writing up, I have sought to embrace just such a praxis of exposure, by opening myself up to the possibility of encounters that are generative of engagement, emotional connection, friendship as well as of violence, injury, rejection and critique. As an *ethic*, it is a praxis that is aspirational in nature: it is something towards which I strive, rather than something I achieve or obtain.

In relation to human displacement, a feminist geopolitical practice based on an ethic of encounter that foregrounds bodily exposure will necessarily open a way for an evaluation of the humanitarian *discourses* and practices that significantly shape displacement. If we take seriously international legal commitments that require the protection and sustenance of refugee populations,

then the measures taken by governments and international agencies to assure their safety, dignity,⁷ and survival *should* also be sufficient to the bodily security of a researcher who seeks to understand the social, political and economic processes that shape their experience. If these measures prove insufficient, then it forces a reassessment of the policies that promulgate differential standards of safety and dignity for displaced people on one hand, and what Jennifer Hyndman labels international *supra-citizens* on the other (Hyndman, 2000).

I am not so naïve as to actually expect such security, nor am I unaware of the privilege attendant upon my pair of first world passports, my skin color and the substantial funding I have access to through my academic credentials. But there has been an understandable reluctance on the part of scholars to conduct research in ways that mean exposure to *some* of the unequal conditions that limit the possibility of refugees and returnees to persist and flourish. The reluctance to be exposed in research has important implications that extend far beyond the research encounter. A research praxis based on an embrace of precariousness, while not without risks, also offers the possibility for an ethic of encounter that recognizes the geopolitics that make some bodies so much more vulnerable.

WHY ETHNOGRAPHY?

Given the centrality of everyday embodied practices to my research, I chose to undertake a multi-sited ethnographic inquiry into the experience of return migration to a small town in post-conflict South Sudan. Inspired by the work of geographers such as Katz (2001a; 2004) Herbert (2000; 1997), Hyndman (2000; 2010b), and Mountz (Mountz, 2010), and spatially sensitive anthropologists such as Moore (2005), Rankin (2004), Tsing (2005), Li (2007), and Hoffman (2011),

⁷ As one of the three ‘durable solutions’ (along with resettlement and local integration) return migration must be *voluntary* and be conducted in *safety* and *dignity* for it to be legal under international law. Since the end of the cold war, repatriation has come to be the preferred solution for protracted refugee crises. Much scholarly research and advocacy attention has focused on these three criteria—voluntariness, safety, and dignity—in assessing the legality and success of repatriation efforts. However, while there have been efforts to define these terms, there is no widely recognized standard by which to measure them (Bradley, 2007).

I undertook a fine-grained qualitative analysis that, while specific to my sites of research, also draws lines of connection to issues and debates that extend beyond the confines of South Sudan. Doing so gets at the “fleshy, messy indeterminate stuff of every day life” (Katz, 2004) in ways that help to illuminate the processes and meanings through which social life and space is produced and reproduced (Herbert, 2000). While ethnography has often been criticized for a perceived lack of generalizability, I think that the detailed knowledge and careful analysis of particular cases that is the product of ethnography holds the greatest possibility to reevaluate existing theory and to build new understandings of social processes.

In the case of a remote area of an unstable country, I would argue that qualitative approaches are even more urgent and appropriate. All knowledge reflects the conditions of its production. While quantitative analyses are often assumed to be more scientific and authoritative, feminist science studies have shown how the ‘view from nowhere’ is always a view from a particular somewhere (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1986). Perhaps, nowhere is the situatedness of all knowledge production—including large N quantitative studies—more easy to apprehend than in places where the body of the scientist (including the social scientist) is rendered visible to readers because of the limitations placed on it as a result of the vulnerability. Knowledge production in the context of rapidly shifting security situations foregrounds the body in ways that deeply problematize notions of objective authority on which much quantitative knowledge rests. Additionally, even when considered on its own terms, under these conditions, quantitative studies face a particular set of challenges that often make it very difficult to undertake methodologically sound analysis. The general lack of reliable baseline data on social life (even population figures are hotly contested) limits the robustness of even the best statistical models.⁸ Though throughout the dissertation I have in several instance

⁸ While there was a population census conducted in 2008 across South Sudan as part of the Fifth National Census, the population figures they reported have been widely disputed. The figures generated by UN agencies and NGO’s are generally not much better, because these organizations often do not have the staff level or time to ensure proper data

relied on statistical data produced by the government of South Sudan, UN agencies and NGOs, I have refrained from hanging analytical claims on this scaffolding.

Given the unstable nature of the political situation in South Sudan, I sought to develop a robust yet modular approach to my dissertation research. This means that, perhaps more than most, the research unfolded in a flexible and constantly adaptive manner. Rather than setting out to complete a pre-established research agenda, my approach was to build my research step by step. This involved periodically stepping back to evaluate a) what kind of data was needed, given my research questions, b) which method of collection was appropriate for producing that data, and c) what I could actually undertake given considerable limits on the possible. Many decisions had as much to do with broader political events, consideration for my own safety and seasonal weather patterns as they did with concerns about what was needed for the research. Doing research in this manner is experimental. And, as with any experiment, I had my share of missteps, mistakes and outright failures. Some of these, if not in the moment that they occurred, then in the end, deeply enhanced my research.

CHOOSING CHUKUDUM

Like most doctoral research, I began developing a detailed research plan nearly a year before I entered the field. This process is challenging for every student, but planning to conduct research in an area emerging from over two decades of conflict provides particular challenges. These include a lack of reliable and comprehensive data, very limited access to basic communication technologies, a constantly changing security environment, not to mention a highly volatile geopolitical climate where

collection procedures and verification. In addition there are reports of widespread data manipulation as local elites may seek to augment their influence through weighting numbers in favor of their own constituencies. This tendency is exacerbated by a lack of local knowledge that often means that sampling methodologies that are brokered through these same elites. For these reasons, any existing data should be viewed with a high degree of skepticism. A highly mobile population with limited access to communication technologies, as well as a lack of transportation infrastructure introduces additional logistical complexities. Any attempt to generate original data sets would require substantial resources—financial, human, time—to overcome these significant challenges.

permission to conduct research might be easily denied because the topic under consideration is political sensitive or because of the nationality of the researcher. Given these difficulties, I realized early on that I would have to take a loose and flexible approach to planning my research.

For instance, six months before I intended to leave for fieldwork—and well after all of my funding applications had been submitted—the International Criminal Court controversially indicted for the first time a sitting head of state: Sudanese president Omer al Bashir. Charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for his government's conduct in the war in Darfur, Bashir remained defiant. In retaliation for the decision, Bashir expelled aid workers from Darfur and banned several humanitarian agencies from operating in the country. In the weeks following these events, reports of threats against westerners in the capital Khartoum emerged, prompting me to reconsider my plan to conduct interviews with Khartoum-based actors involved in organizing IDP returns to the South from the north. It was clear that not only would I not be safe conducting research in the Sudanese capital, but also that any research activities might place participants at risk. Rethinking my plans, I decided instead to interview similarly situated actors involved in planning and assisting repatriation efforts from Kakuma refugee camp in Northern Kenya, since they might be able to provide analogous kinds of data. And in Kenya, my nationality would not be grounds for denying me research permission nor would state security officers monitor my movements.

As this suggests, by the time that I found myself on a plane en-route to Cairo for the first part of my research, I had already changed my plans several times. Arriving in Egypt, I had little more than a sketched out plan for what it was that I was going to do. Or rather, I had a set of three to five contingency plans—plans that I hoped could be pieced together in a variety of combinations without losing the general purpose of the research. This modular approach allowed for considerable flexibility to deal with all number of potential problems that might surface during the research process, including permit denials, illness, local insecurity or an outright return to war to name just a

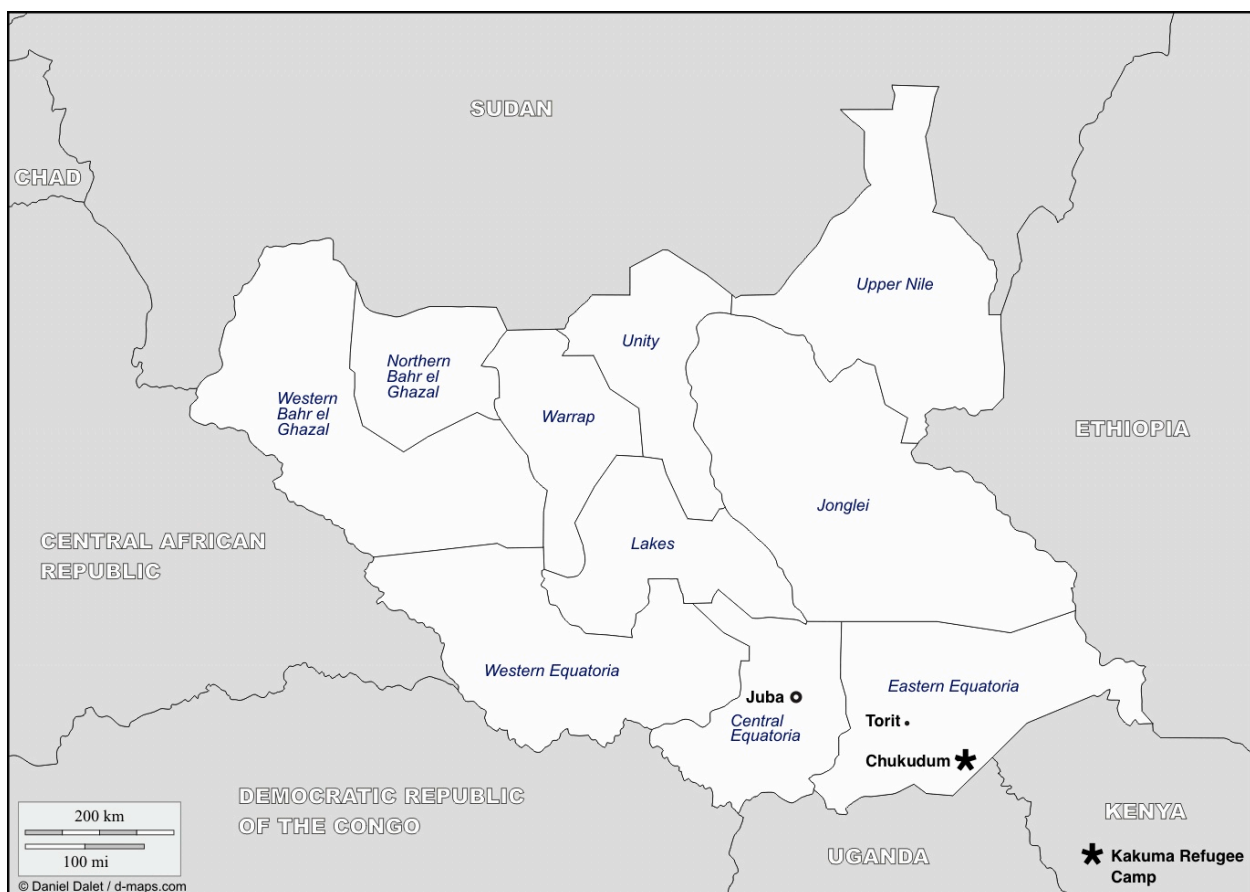
few. Thinking through what *could* go wrong ahead of time and outlining potential courses of action that would still allow for a rigorous research agenda meant that when events outside of my control threw up obstacles to existing plans, I was confident enough to quickly make considered decisions that significantly shifted the shape of my overall research.

One of these critically important decisions dealt with where I would conduct my research. Because I sought to answer questions about the ways in which migration history and notions of belonging articulate with access to resources, I knew early on that I wanted to conduct research in a rural town. But, as I developed my plans I confronted a lack of reliable information about rural areas in South Sudan. Piecing together disparate data on prior and intended returnee movements, seasonal road conditions, air and river access, personal recommendations from those who had spent time in South Sudan as well as security reports, I initially chose to focus my research on the state of Jonglei.

However in the months before I set out, reports of a series of devastating raids and counter-raids in that area began to emerge. By the time I arrived in Juba, I had an inkling that my plans to conduct research in rural Jonglei would likely need to be reconsidered. As I began seeking out transport to Jonglei, and accommodation with NGO's working in the area, both the international staff and South Sudanese (some from that area) met my queries with sideways glances and hesitant silences that gave me pause. It was clear that I was hitting up against an invisible wall of unstated concern. Attentive to these subtle assessments, I soon began to consider seriously changing the location of my research. This set off a week of pouring over available data on security, road conditions and returnee destinations, dialoging with those with more experience on the ground, and seeking out access to accommodation and communication infrastructure in potential research sights.

This process eventually led me to choose to base my research in the small town Chukudum, close to the Ugandan and Kenyan border. This decision—taken incrementally over the course of a few heady days—could never have been planned out in advance given the shifting security situation

and limitation on data. And yet, Chukudum was (perhaps) a more ideal place for me to do my research given its high numbers of returns, its symbolic importance during the war, and the mix of returnees and internally displaced people calling it home. The change in plans also allowed me to travel to the community with a pair of teachers who had been staying in Juba for a two-week literacy-training workshop held on the compound where my guesthouse was located. Arriving with respected members of the community who were willing to vouch for me, and my project, would be an additional bonus.



Map of South Sudan showing Chukudum & Kakuma, © Daniel Dalet

All researchers confront circumstances that force them to re-evaluate their initial plans and goals for their projects. All research unfolds in ways that are contingent on personalities, events and

a myriad of other factors. But when conducting research in the context of political instability and ongoing insecurity, it is even more critical to remain flexible and plan for uncertainty.

FOOTING IT: REFLECTIONS ON MOBILITY IN THE FIELD⁹

Of all the choices I made during the course of my research, my decision to walk had an enormous impact on the outcomes of my study. It was not a decision I theorized deeply, at least initially. Simply the challenges of getting to my field site had occupied most of my thoughts in the months and weeks leading up to beginning fieldwork in a small and remote town in South Sudan. The mere fact of arriving seemed like a major accomplishment in itself. But after a much needed rest from the two-day bone-jangling journey, I was itching to see the place where I would now live. So I did what seemed automatic to me. I took a walk. Little did I know at the time, but my decision to ‘foot it’ (the local term for walking) would have a profound effect on my research; not just how it was perceived, but also the kinds of questions that I would be able to pose and the data that I would gather.

The morning after I arrived, I set out on foot from the NGO compound that would be my home, at least for the first few months of research. That first walk was a bit of a spectacle. I was met with numerous greetings and even more stares. Some teenagers followed me around for a while. All of this didn’t surprise me, since I assumed that in a small town most new-comers are noticed, and as a white woman my presence in the town was certainly notable. Walking the few kilometers into the heart of town, I was overwhelmed. I wanted my eyes to be everywhere, to take in the people and the place.

Chukudum was somehow both bigger and smaller than I had expected. The road, I was told, had recently been re-graded. Along its path a young man was rebuilding a fence that had been

⁹ This section is reprinted from Newhouse, L. S. (2012). Footing it, or why I walk. *African Geographical Review*, 31(1), 67-71.

damaged by the roadwork. A tree of enormous proportions provided shade for an informal market, a bar, and a meeting place; public notices were fixed to its trunk. The road to the hospital branched here, and a kilometer further up another road branched to the main market. Every hundred meters or so, a narrow footpath would emerge from a tangle of thatched houses, on which I could see women carrying jerry cans of water on their heads and babies on their backs. Though the road was now wide enough for several vehicles to pass at once, only one car raced past me on that first walk. With the exception of a handful of bicycles, this road, as well as most of the roads in South Sudan, was the domain of people on foot; town residents carrying out their daily business.

It wasn't until a few weeks later that I realized that my first walk was remarkable for other reasons as well. Each time I left the compound, someone working there would ask where I was headed, and regardless of whether I answered that I was headed to the town administrative center, to the Catholic mission or to the market, that question would be followed with another incredulous one: you are footing it?

To me this seemed obvious. I had arrived in town in a taxi with several other town residents. The town is small enough and remote enough that within a few days I could recognize all of the vehicles that regularly plied the road. Those of the NGOs were recognized by the logos on the side of their land cruisers; that of the county commissioner by the flag fluttering from its front bumper. Then there were the taxis, usually small sedans with Kenyan plates, which serviced the route from the town to the Kenyan border at Nadapal a 4–5-hour drive away. And finally there were the transport trucks that brought grain and other goods to town. Add to that a handful of motorbikes, and that was it. How else was I supposed to get around except by foot? I certainly didn't have a vehicle at my command – just like everyone else in town. But in this place nearly all outsiders, whether from another continent or from another part of Sudan, do not walk, they drive or they are driven.

My arrival in town coincided with the end of a two-month public health initiative by a well-known international NGO. The project was headed by a non-Sudanese woman who was accompanied by four field coordinators and three drivers, all from other parts of Sudan, and three land cruisers. Though the essential staff could fit in just one vehicle, three were deemed necessary because of the bad condition of the roads and the potential for insecurity.

About a week after I got to town, the team was wrapping up their work. The Sudanese staff were busy tallying up the number of people reached by their initiative, leaving the international program officer free for the afternoon. I was planning to go to the market, and since she didn't have any other pressing work to do, she decided to come along. As we walked, she admitted that she had never 'footed it' into town from the compound. Whenever she left the compound, it would be in a convoy of at least two of the vehicles, even if it were just to pick up some soda.

To anyone who has worked in a place with a significant humanitarian presence, this will come as no surprise. High-profile agencies and international NGOs have vast fields of operations. This means that their presence in any one place is typically limited to a couple of days every few weeks or months. Tight timelines leave program staff little time for walking, and security concerns often mean that they are expressly forbidden by their organization to move by foot. But even in the case of locally based NGOs with all 'national' staff, most employees are moved primarily by motorized vehicles. For these less well-funded organizations, staff are generally permitted to move on foot. However, in the social field of rural South Sudan, access to a vehicle helped to mark staff as 'working class' and was seen as one of the privileges that came with steady employment. The vehicles may have been a bit older, or motorbikes used in place of land cruisers, but staff certainly took advantage of their motorized transportation.

Once I settled into my research, I found myself engaging in a popular pastime. The game was to see who could be the first to identify a distant land cruiser by its agency. Whenever a vehicle

moved, people would look to see who it belonged to. The presence of a new vehicle in town was news that spread quickly through the community. The vehicle might mean that a new program was to be set up (potentially a source of employment, or services), a food distribution was about to happen, a community meeting would be called, or a government official from the state capital had come to town. Most of the time, important community events followed the arrival of these vehicles. White land cruisers, in this small town, were a crystallization of power, governmental and otherwise.

Moving by vehicle meant that you were someone to pay attention to, someone that should command a certain respect. But it also often marked those who travelled in that way as people with 'long arms', outsiders with access to resources who had the potential to provide (monetary) assistance. That kind of distinction would have been problematic for my research, as I struggled enough as it was to explain the difference between the kind of scholarly research I was undertaking, and the kind of research that is conducted by NGOs in order to develop new programs or assess the impact of their current ones. For ethical reasons this was important, as I wanted to make sure people understood that I was not here to provide material assistance, and the benefits that they might see from my research would not be new water points or clinics.

As my research wore on, I came to learn the intricate network of footpaths that crisscrossed the town. Almost fractal in their form, it seemed to me that each 'halang' (homestead) had its own shortcut to most of the major destinations: the hospital, the market, the primary school, the county offices. Soon these paths replaced the road in my daily wanderings, for both practical and methodological reasons. The wideness of the road meant little shade in the midday heat, besides often being a more circuitous route. But walking was also a way of participating in public life.

Passing by and through the halangs of many town residents, I became familiar. Children stopped shouting 'kawaja' (foreigner), and started to shout my name. Women cooking in their yard would call out to me, asking where I was headed, and where I had come from. Old men gathered in

the shade of mango trees talking politics invited me to stop and sit with them for a while; insisting I take some local beer. First I came to know people's faces, and then their names, and then, with time, the web of relations that connected them together. Understanding these relationships—were they primarily based on kinship, age-set, gender, or having been neighbors in one of the refugee camps—and their impact on people's daily lives was one of the central questions of my research. While interviews provided some of the answers, I learned more from the accidental and unplanned interactions I had as I walked around town.

Several months after my arrival, I was heading back from the market with some food I was planning to prepare for dinner. On the path I was met by Loboï, a young man who had been my guide/translator in the early stages of my research. During this time I would pass from halang to halang introducing myself and explaining my presence to the community. Though we had covered the entire town on foot together, we had never taken this particular path. When he saw me, his eyes lit up with surprise and amusement. Laughing, he joked that I was getting to be a shortcut expert. I'm sure there were many shortcuts that I never found. But with each discovery of a new route, I felt like I was closer and closer to becoming an insider, or at least a familiar stranger.

What, exactly, was it about walking that had such an impact on my research? Walking takes time. The slow pace gives an opportunity for greetings and introductions. It leaves open the possibility of detours, getting sidetracked, or getting into casual conversations, all of which enriches research. I was invited to gather firewood with the women (which I did) and to go hunting with the men (which I didn't). I heard the latest gossip about the local leaders and the news of important community events more quickly. Seeing people gathering at a compound, I came to know of the death of a neighbor or of a naming ceremony for a newborn child. I crossed gardens and was asked to lend a hand, learning that way of the failures of the bees to pollinate a variety of sorghum. I learned of this brother or that daughter who had moved to America, Canada, or Australia. I received

and rebuffed countless marriage proposals with what I hope was humor. Not a few times, rainsqualls forced me to seek shelter in the nearest home. These unplanned interactions slowly built upon each other, deepening relationships, and building trust.

But walking was also an expression of trust on my part; it showed that despite all of the reports of insecurity, I didn't fear the people I was working with. At the same time, by moving on foot I made myself as vulnerable as they were to the very present possibility of cattle raids and other potential violence. I shared in the precariousness of life; that which Judith Butler defines as a feature of what it means to be apprehended as human:

Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know, and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged on by the exposure of the dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous

(Butler, 2009, p. 14)

In walking, I was exposed—not just to the heat of the day, a sudden downpour or the whims of cattle-keeping youth with Kalashnikovs. I exposed myself as well. I became human.

On one of those days that every researcher knows—when everything seems to be going pear-shaped, doubts well up, filling the mind with visions of failure, and the exhaustion of always being an object of public scrutiny begins to wear—I climbed to the top of a granite outcropping that looked over the town to be by myself, to rage and despair. To my annoyance, I was met by a young man, whom I didn't recognize. He introduced himself as Lokwar, and attempted to strike up a conversation. Unable to stomach small talk, my black mood leaked out in sarcastic comments as I tried to hold back tears. This was another me, very different from the open and boisterous person I tried hard to present in my interaction with most people. What I got in response was engagement built on the recognition that I, too, could experience the frustrations and disappointments of life.

In the days and weeks that followed, Lokwar and I ran into each other all over town—in the market or while I observed the land survey. The openness of that first meeting set the tone for our

subsequent interactions. We became friends. As that friendship grew, he brought me into his family—first by inviting me to meals and later by providing me with a room in one of the extended family’s houses. Living in their *balang*, I learned the stories of the family’s experiences of the conflict, each member recounting her/his unique perspective and history of migration. More importantly, I participated in the daily domestic chores that make up much of a woman’s day in the town. I joined in beer brewing, child minding, weeding and the daily preparation of meals. I went to the market and learned the ways that women strive to balance subsistence cultivation, income-generating activities and familial consumptive needs. I realized the critical place of petty alcohol production as an engine of income circulation and redistribution—taking money out of hands of local (male) elite and putting it into those of women producers, who in turn used the money to supplement family food or labor with purchases of local produce and firewood, setting the cycle in motion again. But most importantly, I became responsible to people outside of myself, to something outside of my research. All of this depended on the intimacy and the willingness to expose myself that walking engendered.

Research is always politically fraught, whether it occurs across wide differences in culture, wealth, and experience, or with those very similar to the researcher, or with friends (Browne, 2003; England, 1994; Nagar, 2002). As Katz (1994) points out, power inheres in the whole of the process of qualitative research – the act of choosing the ‘field’, of arriving and being taken seriously, and of being able to leave. Moving to and from the field are moments that often highlight for researchers these questions of power. But what about moving in the field? As Tim Cresswell reminds us, mobility ‘... is an ethical and political issue as much as a utilitarian and practical one’ (Cresswell, 2011, p. 552). In my research, walking was a radical act. It was recognition of a common humanity and an expression of solidarity. Footing it, then, was the starting point of a politically and emotionally engaged research.

OUTSIDE-IN: A NOTE ON MY POSITION IN THE CAMP

Many researchers working with refugees, though certainly not all, draw on extensive experience working in the humanitarian sector. Access to the spaces of refugee management is facilitated through strong personal and professional networks. Relationships with refugees are often initiated or channeled through these agencies, which can help make relatively quick research visits fruitful. Researchers in this position may gain access to refugee leaders, vehicles, official liaison meetings or trainings with refugees, institutional data and so forth. As this suggests, there are significant logistical benefits to researcher/practitioner crossover in this context. There are potential methodological benefits as well; recent geographical research on refugees and asylum seekers has taken up the call to 'study up,' in an effort to understand the powerful institutions that define and shape refugee experience (Hyndman, 2000; Mountz, 2010).

However there are also drawbacks to such an approach. Researchers may come to be too closely identified with aid personnel in the eyes of refugees, coloring these interactions. Similarly familiarity with the functioning of program operations may obscure the rarefied perceptions and misperceptions of agencies and their activities that are prevalent among refugees. Studying the institutions that manage refugee experience from the inside is certainly valuable, but it cannot always capture the ways in which refugees themselves make sense of the role of these institutions in their lives. Both perspectives are necessary for a robust understanding of refugee camp life.

In my case, I did not have or seek access to the spaces of refugee assistance agencies at work in the camp. Instead, my route to Kakuma Refugee Camp was negotiated through hometown connections. This allowed me to quickly establish relationships of trust with the Didinga refugees there. I arrived to find that many people already knew my name. Frequent cross-border traffic between Kakuma and Chukudum, especially during the holidays, meant that a handful of people living in the camp had previously met me while I was conducting research in Chukudum, and an

even larger number had heard of me and my research project. For those that hadn't, the fact that I had been to their home village, and could tell them news of the condition of the roads, recent raiding, and the situation of the crops helped to build trust. No doubt conversations between people outside of my presence also relayed information about me, my purpose and whether or not I was to be trusted.

The single most important factor in the community's acceptance of my presence was the guidance of my research assistant and the welcome given to me by his family. This was Lokwar, the young man I had met on the outcropping overlooking Chukudum months before. The son of a prominent person in Chukudum, he had recently returned to Kakuma seeking medical treatment for his mother, Pepii. Without even having to ask, he met me at the bus on my arrival and appointed himself as guide, interpreter and host for my time in the camp. Having grown up in the camp, he knew the refugee leaders and had friends in all of the groups where Didinga stayed. Additionally, Pepii was well regarded by their fellow Didinga refugees as principled and generous in her support and assistance for others. Their willingness to vouch for me and my project was perhaps the most critical factor that impacted my ability to conduct research with the Didinga residents of the camp.

Of course, refugee camps are highly regulated places, and some interaction between the camp administration and myself was required, especially as a very visible white woman. In order gain access to the camp for research, I had to gain the approval of two arms of the national Kenyan government and notify the local government officials resident at the camp. Similarly, I considered informing the UNHCR head of office of my research agenda an ethical requirement, even if my research did not focus specifically on their work in the camp. Aside from one interview with the UNHCR official charged with coordinating the southern Sudanese repatriation program and a few attempts to make use of agency internet connections (mostly unsuccessfully), these occasions encompass the entirety of my interactions with the managing institutions at work in Kakuma Camp.

Furthermore, at the time of my study an environment of mistrust between staff and independent researchers had developed—due to a recent incident in which a journalist visiting without authorization wrote highly critically of the agencies operating in the camp—limiting the possibility for unguarded interaction. My decision to stay in the camp, rather than at the NGO compound or at the guesthouse in town created additional social distance.

My views of management operations in the camp, therefore, reflect the representations made by the refugees with whom I talked. No-doubt there is a great deal of misperception and mystification as a result, a limitation I recognize. If the practices of the UNHCR or other agencies seem remote, disembodied and/or inscrutable in what follows, this done in an attempt to give credence to the way these institutions are viewed by the people who they purport to manage, assist, sensitize or capacitate.

THE DETAILS

This dissertation is fundamentally an *ethnographic* account of the social and spatial fallout of refugee return migration in Chukudum and its relation to the transformation of practices and subjectivities engendered by living in Kakuma, one of several refugee camps to which residents fled during the conflict. I conducted most of the research for this dissertation over the course of 13 months between September 2009 and October 2010. I gathered additional data on two return visits to South Sudan and Kakuma refugee camp undertaken between June and December 2011, comprising a total of 5 months. Though I conducted research in several locations, the majority of my time was spent in Chukudum town (a total of 9 months) and in Kakuma Refugee Camp (nearly 4 months). The remaining time was split between Juba (the capital of South Sudan), Torit (the capital of Eastern Equatoria State), and Kapoeta (a market town between Chukudum and Kakuma) in South Sudan. In addition, I spent 6 weeks conducting interviews with voluntary organizations working with Cairo's substantial South Sudanese population and undertaking archival research in the

grey literature collection at the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies' library at the American University of Cairo.

Though the bulk of the insights explored in this dissertation derived from participant observation in Chukudum and Kakuma, the dissertation grew out of a combination of methods that each provided a unique contribution to the overall direction of the research. Combining participant observation with interviews, survey data, and archival research can get at the complexity of social life by examining it from different angles (Bryman, 2006; Creswell & Clark, 2003; England, 2005; Graham, 1999; Nightingale, 2003; Pain, 2003; Sharp, 2005). In my own research, this technique produced several insights that I may not have arrived at through participant observation alone. For example, review of war time propaganda produced by various factions of the SPLA during the 1990s not only helped me get a deeper understanding of the various politicized discourse that shaped that period of the conflict, the surprising number of articles that discussed southerners cultural rights to produce and consume alcohol alerted me to the symbolic importance of this activity to South Sudanese nationalist sentiment. While I noted southerner concern over the regulation of alcohol during my initial review of these documents, it wasn't until I had spent several months in Chukudum that I was able to contextualize this concern and recognize its importance not only to the struggle for liberation, but also to local livelihoods and identities.

Participant Observation

Participant observation, the hallmark of ethnographic research, can describe a myriad of practices that are perhaps as diverse as the people that undertake them. In my own research the scope and relationship between the two components—participation and observation—shifted considerably as the research progressed.

Early in the research, observation of everyday social life took center stage in my research process. Arriving in a new location, I felt the need to familiarize myself with the norms and practices

of social life before I felt comfortable enough to participate in these activities. At that time, I was living at the residential compound of one of the few NGO's operating in Chukudum. The compound itself was both physically and socially distant from the town, so my research was characterized by forays out to public gathering places like the market, the Catholic mission and the county government headquarters. The initial phase of my research corresponded to a time of increased public activity, as schools and projects came to a close in the weeks running up to Christmas. The various meetings and community events provided ample opportunity for me to begin to get a picture the social and political life of the town, and the various personalities that shaped it.

As I grew more familiar with the town, I began to be invited to socialize with people in their *halangs*. I soon felt comfortable enough to ask permission to shadow a few of my friends as they went about routine daily activities, such as gathering firewood or going to the market—marking a shift from a more observational stance to one based more on participation. This extended to shadowing low level government workers distributing famine relief grain and surveying the land in town in anticipation of the county's (failed) effort to formalize land ownership. A bigger shift in the balance between observation/shadowing and fuller participation in everyday life corresponded with my growing friendship with Lokwar, who would later become my research assistant and whose family would host me for more than 2/3 of my research. Initially through his invitations to join in family meals, and later to stay with the family, first in Kakuma and then Chukudum, I gained deeper understanding of everyday life in both places.

This knowledge resulted from my engagement with, and increasing responsibility towards members of this extended family. Living with the family, I was expected to contribute to the everyday tasks that kept the family going—including fetching water, food preparation, marketing, child care, agricultural labor and so forth—appropriate to my gendered and generational status

within the family, though of course expectations of me were considerably limited by my status as a prestigious visitor. When I was finally able to convince the family that it was precisely these kinds of practices and activities that I was most interested in, I was bemusedly permitted to take on more and more of the daily household tasks and chided by them when I got them wrong. During this period I focused more squarely on understanding and attempting to master local livelihood practices, spending less of my time observing public political life in town.

Regardless of the balance between the distinct components of participant observation, I recorded detailed field notes about my observations, experiences and my conversations with town residents, civil servants and my host family. My field notes included a quick jottings undertaken on the fly throughout the day to record important insights or particular comments and turns of phrases as well as a more detailed set of notes fleshed out when I was able to sit aside and take more time to capture episodes in fine grained description. Often this was done at night by flashlight, as access to electricity was considerably limited (two hours of generator time daily was the maximum available to me, for much of the time it was significantly less, or none at all).

Interviews

While much of what is represented in these pages relies on knowledge produced through participant observation, I also draw on data gathered through over 130 semi-structured and life history interviews (conducted in Juba, Torit, Chukudum and Kapoeta in South Sudan, in Kakuma, in Kenya, and in Cairo, Egypt). In both Chukudum and Kakuma, I chose to conduct interviews to supplement and extend knowledge gained through participant observation, while data relating to the experiences of jobseekers in urban areas such as Juba, Torit and Kapoeta, was almost exclusively gathered through interviews.

In Chukudum and Kakuma, interviews were conducted in both English and Didinga with the help of several of my research assistants. In Chukudum, I spoke to returnees from Kakuma and

other refugee camps located in Uganda, those who had spent the most violent part of the conflict in the remote mountains or in urban areas in South Sudan as well as a few who had spent the entirety of the conflict in or near town. I asked residents questions about what the town had been like prior to the conflict, where they had lived, how they were faring at the moment, and what kinds of changes they noted—either since they returned or since others began to return. Some participants were eager to share in-depth life histories, while others were less forthcoming.

In Kakuma, I worked closely with Lokwar, to conduct interviews with refugees who remained in the camp. These interviews touched on the positives and negatives of refugee camp life, their assessment of the situation back at home, and their plans regarding the possibility of returning home. In both places, interviews were not audio recorded to protect the identity of participants, rather I took extensive notes of what was said during the interviews, being careful to take down as much of the conversation as possible verbatim.

In contrast, the interviews with officials, NGO staff and representatives of community organizations conducted in Cairo, Juba, Torit, Kapoeta and Kakuma were audio recorded, and later transcribed. During the return trip to South Sudan between October and December, I conducted a separate smaller research project on returnee job-seekers looking for work in the urban centers of Torit and Kapoeta towns. Some of the interviews and research conducted as part of that research appears in this dissertation. Lokwar again acted as my research assistant and was an actively involved in the interviewing process during the majority of those interviews. The interviews were audio recorded, and later transcribed.

Livelihood and Income Generation Survey

As my initial period of research drew to a close, I began to feel that it was critically important to gain a more generalized idea of the variety of livelihood practices and income generation strategies present in Chukudum town. A more broad based assessment of these practices

would, I felt, lend additional credence to the insights gained through participant observation. In addition, the lack of data from government and NGO sources left me without a credible estimate of the population of the town or the number of returnees living there. To that end, I developed a survey designed to capture individual and household data relating to migration history, livelihood and income generating practices and spending habits. A copy of the survey can be examined in Appendix I.

While all attempts were made to develop a sampling frame that would allow me to make inferences based on survey data, the lack of accurate population data made this extremely difficult. I chose a geographic sampling frame for feasibility reasons. By using publicly available satellite imagery of the area (from Google Earth), I divided the town into sections and assigned each residential compound a number. Households were then to be selected based on a stratified random sample. Using a combination of different sources to estimate the town population (7,000-12,000) and number of households (HH=2600), I settled on a target sample size of 200, which I judged to be sufficient in terms of feasibility and in terms of being able to generalize from the data. Given those calculations, one in 13 houses would be selected for inclusion in the survey.

However, once I began to conduct the survey it quickly became clear that the satellite data was out of date, and my population estimates significantly off the mark. Though the constructed sampling frame had to be abandoned, I continued to use the 1 in 13 households as a guideline for selecting participants. This resulted in a final sample size of 79 completed surveys, selected on a more loosely defined stratified geographical sample. Given these challenges, it would be very difficult to estimate error. For this reason I have refrained from making inferences based on the data gathered, and all discussion of the survey is purely descriptive. Additionally the overwhelming majority of participants were women, as they were more likely to be at home at the times when the

survey was conducted. Men typically returned home in the evening, but for safety reasons changing the time of data collection was not feasible.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research this project has a number of limitations. Firstly, the research is an account of the socio-spatial and material transformations that accompanied displacement from and return to Chukudum. The experiences and processes detailed in the pages of the dissertation relate specifically to this particular geography and cannot be read as a general account of return migration in other communities in South Sudan, of the experience of all refugees living in Kakuma, or indeed of all refugees from Chukudum. South Sudan is a large and extremely diverse country. There are an estimated 60-150 languages and dialects spoken in South Sudan. And each ethnic group has their own set of traditions, histories, land use patterns and productive practices. Across the country there is also a wide variety in climactic conditions, land productivity and accessibility. All of these factors significantly shaped the experience of return migration in Chukudum, and so, it can be inferred, would also be important in their unique combination for each community facing return migration across South Sudan.

Similarly, in relation to my research in Kakuma refugee camp, I focused on one particular group of refugees—the Didinga of Budi County—whose prior livelihood practices were based in subsistence agriculture and pastoral production. As will become clear, their experiences are not generalizable to all residents of Kakuma Camp. Many refugees living in Kakuma (including some Southern Sudanese) have long histories of trading and deep engagement with the market economy. No doubt residence in the camp has meant significant changes in their livelihood strategies as well, but examining *those* changes is beyond the scope of my research and will not be discussed extensively in my dissertation chapter. Likewise, my discussion of the changes undergone by the host Turkana population since the creation of the camp draws heavily on previously published research,

supplemented by my own participant observation of the trading behaviors of Turkana inside the camp. As I speak neither Turkana nor Kiswahili these representations cannot hope to capture the full impact of the camp on host livelihoods, or the ways in which the Turkana engaging in trade with refugees understand them.

Additionally, the analysis of the transformations of Didinga refugees' material practices that grew out of refugee camp life are deeply tied to the contingent and particular ways in which space was regulated in Kakuma. Each refugee camp is unique in that sense, and there is wide variation in the ways in which national governments, international agencies, host populations and refugees themselves interact to produce camp space. In Uganda, for example, refugees were given small plots in which they were expected to eventually become food self-sufficient reducing the responsibility of the government and humanitarian agencies to provide external food assistance. This policy, it seems clear, would be productive of significantly different material practices to those in Kakuma. A fuller analysis of the impact of refugee return migration would incorporate these distinct sets of practices. However due to safety, time and financial constraints, I was unable to visit the camps where Didinga refugees lived in Uganda, DR Congo, Central African Republic and the neighborhoods where internally displaced Didinga lived in Khartoum.

Another set of limitations deals with language. Though I spent significant efforts prior to my arrival in South Sudan studying Arabic, I never achieved a level of fluency that would allow me to have more than a fairly basic conversation in the language. Additionally, the Arabic spoken in South Sudan—more actually considered a pidgin or creole than a dialect—differs substantially in terms of grammar and vocabulary from the Modern Standard Arabic taught in universities. And while Juba Arabic is widely spoken in the capital and other urban area, and among soldiers, it was not widely used in Chukudum where people preferred to use Didinga, their mother tongue. Given the last minute change in field location, I had little opportunity to familiarize myself with the Didinga

language prior to my arrival in Chukudum. Still, I began to study the language in earnest, though as a comparatively small language, there were very few resources available to assist me in that project. It must be mentioned, however, that there was such a high proportion of town residents who had spent time living in neighboring Kenya and Uganda, where English is the language of instruction. This meant that a sizeable minority of town residents could speak at least a small amount of English. Among men, the political elite and the younger generation the proportion of competent English speakers was significantly higher, especially since the town had long used English as the language of instruction in the schools. Outside of formal interviews, when I always arranged for an interpreter, it was very common for English speakers to translate for me spontaneously. Still, my inability to speak the local language meant that there was much of everyday social life that escaped me, especially in the first months of my research.

Given the insecurity that characterized life in Chukudum, concern for ensuring my personal safety also created its own limitations. This meant steering clear of various high-risk activities and locations, including moving around during the hours of darkness (6:30pm to 5:30 am), walking in the mountains without a local guide, and spending time in the bush with the men responsible for cattle and goat herding, or those out on hunting forays. These were also distinctly gendered practices, and that created an additional barrier to my participation. Though sensible, such restrictions meant that I was unable to get a deep understanding of pastoral production in particular, which is nevertheless critical to household livelihood strategies. Another precaution that meant limiting my research was my choice to leave South Sudan during the run up to and immediate aftermath of the 2010 national elections, in case there were efforts to destabilize the political situation through violence. Fortunately the elections were largely peaceful and I was able to return to my research without problem.

A SHORT HISTORY OF A LONG CONFLICT

South Sudan has a long history of conflict, one that stems from the bifurcated nature of governance that grew out of the project of joint colonial rule that is known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). This saw distinct government policies relating to language, education, taxation and governance implemented in the south of the country to 'protect' southerners from exploitation by northerners. The legacy of Britain's *Southern Policy*, as these programs were collectively known, has profoundly impacted Sudanese history, not least of which being the dissonance between the political ambitions and philosophies of leaders in both the North and South which was present even in the negotiations around self-rule in the colony (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003).

In the years following World War II, pressure began to mount for the end of colonial rule in Sudan. These efforts gained further impetus with the success of the free officers movement coup against King Farouk in Egypt, lead by an officer of partial Sudanese extraction. The events in Egypt put self-rule on the agenda in Sudan, though there were political disagreements as to whether this should take place under a unified greater Egypt, or as a separate, unified independent state (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). The political movements militating for self-rule were centered in the north, and little input was solicited from Southerners. This resulted in a plan for transition to self-rule in a united Sudan. This was disappointing to both South Sudanese people and the colonial officers stationed in the south, who feared that southern views and interest would not be represented in a unitary state. These fears were confirmed when, in the immediate run-up to self-rule, the colonial government took steps to Sudanize all government administration. When the process was completed in 1954, only six southerners were appointed to local administrative positions. The bulk of the positions were given to Arabic speaking northerners, who were unfamiliar with the south and contemptuous of its people. Additionally, northern officers were put in charge of

the Equatoria Corps, whose ranks consisted of all Southerners (Collins, 2008, p. 65). These developments made many southerners extremely wary of the coming independence from Britain.

In 1955, the mistrust reached a boiling point when soldiers of the Equatoria Corps stationed at Torit refused to follow orders transferring the unit to the North. They rushed the armors depot, capturing arms and ammunition, and turned their weapons on the northern residents of the town. The mutiny at Torit was succeeded by mutinies of Southerner soldiers based in several other towns across the south including Juba, Yei and Maridi (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003; Rolandsen, 2011a). During these disturbances, the mutineers deliberately targeted northern merchants, administrators and teachers living in the south, leaving 261 dead (Collins, 2008, p. 67). Of those southerners that participated in the mutiny, many left for the bush, those that didn't were jailed or executed (Collins, 2008). For most of the next decade the security situation in southern Sudan was characterized by minor skirmishes and uncoordinated attacks more akin to banditry than to war (Rolandsen, 2011a; 2011b).

The Anyanya War

For many southern Sudanese, including the residents of Chukudum, the war had little impact on day-to-day life until the early 1960's when the various armed rebels came together with disaffected political leaders and students to form the separatist Anyanya movement. The rebellion drew most of its support from the people of greater Equatoria, and was more active in this area than in Upper Nile and Bahr al Ghazal. With a series of coordinated attacks across Equatoria in September 1963, and additional attacks in Upper Nile and Bahr al Ghazal, the conflict escalated from occasional incidents at police outposts to civil unrest (Rolandsen, 2011a; 2011b). In response the national Army went on the offensive, and the excessive character of the reprisals—including the massacre of 1,400 civilians in Juba in 1965 and an attack on the wedding party of a prominent Southern politician in Wau the same year—further galvanized the resistance (Collins 2008).

Given the regional political climate, the Anyanya coalesced around the political goal of winning the right to self-determination for the south, which they believed would inevitably result in succession of the south (D. H. Johnson, 2003). With the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and their commitment to retain colonial borders, explicitly secessionist rhetoric on the part of the rebellion was taboo. Indeed, the need to reconcile southerner's secessionist desires with an African political climate in which irredentist struggles were highly unwelcome remained a sticky problem for Southern Sudanese rebels and politicians for the next 40 years.

Despite efforts to present a unified front against the north, unity between and among mutineers, students, southern politicians under a singular Anyanya did not last long (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003; Rolandsen, 2011a). Throughout the mid 1960's factionalism and petty rivalry (often along ethnic lines) characterized both the political and military landscape, a state of affairs that was successfully manipulated by successive governments in Khartoum. However, with his successful negotiations of arms deals and military training arrangements with Israel in 1967, leadership of the Anyanya coalesced around Equatorian Joseph Lagu, who lead the movement to a negotiated settlement with the North in 1972, known as the Addis Ababa Agreement (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). While not the self-determination that many had fought for, the Addis Ababa Agreement set forth a new government framework offer the south substantial autonomy in a unified southern regional authority (Alier, 2003; Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003).

Flight & Return: Didinga during the Anyanya War

Rebel activity in the area around Chukudum increased in the mid 1960s. Chukudum and Naqichot were both targeted in the September 1963 attacks in Eastern Equatoria, coordinated by rebel leader Taffeng (Rolandsen, 2011b). In February 1964, a reprisal attack by the northern army, prompted many people from the area to leave (Trappe, 1971). Between 7, 000 and 10,000 people from the Didinga Hills left with their animals to seek refuge in Uganda (Trappe, 1971). Many of

these were residents of Chukudum town and the surrounding lowland villages. However, because Ugandan officials did not permit them to move with their animals beyond the immediate border area, some of the men returned with their herds to the Didinga Hills.¹⁰ After a short period of accommodation close to the border, the majority of the refugees were resettled in the Nakapiripirit settlement scheme, located in the underserved Karamoja district in Northern Uganda (Trapp, 1971).

In conformity with the thinking at the time among policy makers, the refugees at Nakapiripirit were assigned small plots of land with the intention that they would produce their own food. Ugandan and United Nation's authorities envisioned that refugees settled in rural settlement scheme at Nakapiripirit would become self-sufficient in food after a short time (Trappe, 1971). However, due to climactic conditions in the region and the lack of access to their animals, which had provided key nutritional support, the refugees at Nakapiripirit never became fully self-sufficient (Trappe, 1971). However, from the perspective of the refugees who I spoke with decades later, there were a number of benefits from the time spent in Uganda. These include exposure to new agricultural techniques, new crops and varieties and better access to services, especially schooling. By and large, Didinga refugees of that generation took advantage the schooling that was made available to them while in exile. The availability of schooling in Nakapiripirit produced a cohort of educated children (primarily boys), several of whom were able to continue with their education, completing primary and continuing on to secondary school in Sudan or Uganda, or to minor or major seminary under the sponsorship of the Catholic Church. Many these boys grew up to take up leadership roles in Didinga areas – including as government administrators, 'traditional' chiefs, community health workers, teachers and priests in the Catholic Diocese of Torit (Rogge & Akol, 1989).

¹⁰ A UNRISD report states that the group of Didinga arriving in February 1964 attempted to cross into Uganda with 20-98,000 head of cattle, and 25-30,500 small animals (sheep and goats), many of which were reported to be infected with disease (given the time frame this could have been part of separate hoof & mouth and rinderpest epidemics to hit the region. Several interviews with elders in Chukudum suggest that during this time there was a significant drop in Didinga herd size—whether through disease, raiding or attempts to cross the border to Uganda, it is not clear).

Didinga refugees returned from Uganda after the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord ending the first civil war. A coordinated repatriation effort was undertaken by UNHCR, with most people returning to the area in 1974, a decade after their initial flight. My research suggests that many of these chose to settle in Chukudum town. The school, government offices, and newly initiated NGO activities attracted many residents to town in the inter-war period. During this time the population of Chukudum expanded, though population figures for the town are unreliable¹¹. The return of refugees from Uganda also signaled a shift in livelihood strategies away from transhumant pastoralism towards agricultural production, though livestock remained an important both economically and culturally.¹² According to several elders I interviewed, those returning from Nakapiripirit took advantage of the new agricultural varieties and techniques that they had been exposed to in Uganda to make their own farms more productive. When these proved successful, the innovations were taken up by other farmers as well, including those that had never been in Uganda.

The efforts of returnees to make agriculture more productive in the decade between the two civil wars received a boost from the support of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), an NGO that established a broad agenda of supporting development on the east bank of the Nile in the interwar period. NCA was well funded, and widely recognized as one of the most efficient of the humanitarian and development organizations working in southern Sudan at the time. NCA took over the provision of basic infrastructure and social services, which normally would have been the responsibility of the state. They had projects in road building, well drilling, agricultural support, education and health, in addition to technical, administrative and financial support services for the

¹¹ Human Rights Watch reported that the population of Chukudum reached to 58,550, citing the 1983 national census while reporting the total Didinga Population at 68,000 (Rone, Prendergast, & Sorensen, 1994). Given interview data and discussions of historical settlement patterns in the area, I do not find the census numbers credible. Some reports suggest that enumerators in the 1983 census were reluctant to travel long distances on foot, and relied on figures provided to them by area chiefs. Given the rugged terrain, it is likely that no enumerators traveled to the upland areas of the Didinga Hills.

¹² According to town residents, the de-stocking that occurred in the 1960's also contributed to this re-calibration of the balance between agricultural and pastoral production among the Didinga, with agriculture becoming more important to livelihoods.

development of agricultural co-operatives, and other socio-economic development opportunities. The organization was the largest employer in the region, with as many as 2000 employees (Tvedt, 1994).

In the vicinity of Chukudum, NCA constructed several roads connecting the region to the main road between Juba and the border with Kenya. They also supported rural development initiatives and the creation of farmer co-operatives across the region. Chukudum hosted one of NCA's six rural development centers, with several international staff stationed in the town (Tvedt, 1994). This project is best remembered for the introduction of mango cultivation as well as the provision of plows and training in plowing techniques using draught animals. The trees planted by NCA still line the road leading to the hospital, and the proliferation of mature mango stands planted in the 1970's and 1980's throughout the area can be counted as one of the enduring legacies of NCA's presence in the town.

The interregnum in broader perspective: 1972-1983

The Addis Ababa agreement ended the first Sudanese Civil war, and provided a new framework for government in the South. The key provision was the unification of the three provinces of the south into one administrative unit, and the granting of significant autonomy to this new administrative unit. The agreement placed authority over local government, education, public health, natural resources and policing in the hands of a southern regional government comprised of a regional assembly and executive council. Defense, currency, foreign policies remained under the purview of Khartoum (Alier, 2003; Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003; Stevens, 1976). The most controversial provision was the integration of Anyanya fighters into the that national army, which was opposed most of the key stakeholders--Southern politicians wished to retain their own security forces, the Northern military hierarchy trusted neither the commanders nor the rank and file that they had fought as enemies for nearly a decade, while the Anyanya themselves, feared that they

would be discriminated against and eventually forced out (Collins, 2008, p. 113). Whether resulting from real or perceived bias, there was an ongoing string of minor mutinies and defections by former Anyanya fighters, who absconded with their weapons to the bush to take up arms again against the Khartoum government.

Despite these challenges, the years comprising the First Southern Regional Assembly (1973-1977) were embraced with hope that a new, more democratic and representative government would take root in the South. A civil administration was created, and the Assembly debated legislation and undertook the work of government as best it could (Alier, 2003; Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). However factionalism, corruption and ethnic and personal rivalries soon came to dominate southern political life, a development encouraged through the active interference of northern political interests. A key axis of schism and conflict was that between the loosely aligned Equatorians and the Dinka, who formed a majority of the population in the South. Equatorians had been at the helm of the Anyanya at the time of the peace deal and their higher levels of education translated into better opportunities for civil service appointments. On the other hand, a young politically ambitious cohort of educated Dinka from Bor came of age and began to assert itself (Collins, 2008). The transformation of ministries into ethnic fiefdoms further exacerbated ethnic based tensions in the south.

Another critical provision of the Addis Ababa agreement addressed uneven development in Sudan, committed to directing a larger proportion of national resources to development and infrastructure projects in the south. While the amounts did increase, funding levels remained below a proportionate share in the South (Stevens, 1976). Apart from the residents of a handful of towns including Juba, Torit and Wau, and Yei, residents of Southern Sudan saw little concrete benefits from the new political arrangements. Khartoum retained control over national economic policy, including funds for development. Despite the commitments in the peace agreement, few projects

were planned for the south, and even few implemented. The discovery of oil reserves in the South in 1978, the unilateral decision to ship the crude oil to the north for refinement rather than to build a refinery in the south put further fuel on the fire of southern discontentment (Collins, 2008).

The Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army

The 1970's saw the political climate in southern Sudan slowly deteriorate. The Khartoum based government progressively went back on more and more of the commitments laid out in the Addis Ababa agreement that had ended the First Civil War. To make matters worse, southern political leaders succumbed to in-fighting and personal rivalries, which were often inflamed by the northern government. Eventually the dissatisfaction of southern politicians and soldiers reached a point that they could no longer participate with the government. Several former rebel commanders went to the bush, creating low-level insecurity for government officials. They were later joined later by southern politicians and defectors from the national military hierarchy.

By 1983, Southern dissatisfaction reached a boiling point (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). Secretly, Numayri began organizing the absorption of southern units in the national army into battalions under northern command and arranging their transfer to the North and West of the country. On May 16 Southern soldiers who had been given orders to redeploy to the North mutinied at Bor. Then next day, two nearby garrisons had joined them in the bush, events which are remembered today as sparking off the Second Sudanese Civil War (Collins, 2008; Guarak, 2011; D. H. Johnson, 2003). Within a few weeks, President Ja'afar Numayri—who ten years earlier had ushered in peace with the Addis Ababa Agreement—announced sweeping changes to the government of Sudan. Chief among these was the re-division of the Southern region. Under the provisions of *Republican Order Number One*, the Southern Regional Assembly was disbanded, Arabic instituted as the only official language in the country, and political offices that had previously been determined through election were now to be appointed by the president and stripped of fiscal

authority (Collins, 2008). Increasingly allied to and dependent on the support of the National Islamic Front, Numayri instituted sharia (Islamic Law) throughout all of Sudan a short while later, further drawing the country towards war (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003).

Numayri, perhaps underestimating the depth of disillusionment among southerners, sent American educated Colonel John Garang to quell a simmering mutiny in his home area of Bor (Collins, 2008). But Garang had been instrumental in planning the mutinies and rather than quell the rebellion, he defected and assumed leadership of the newly minted Sudan People's Liberation Army. The new rebel movement consisted of battalions that had absconded in Bor, Pochalla and Pibor and remnants of dissatisfied Anyanya fighters who had gone to the bush long before the 1983 troubles. (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). In contrast to the poorly coordinated Anyanya fighters of the first civil war, this new rebel force claimed among its members several officers who had received significant military training both in the national Army (SAF) and abroad, not least of these Garang himself. Politically astute, militarily trained and highly educated (he earned a PhD in agricultural economics from Iowa State), it fell to Garang to lead, organize and train the disparate groups of defectors, ex-police and former Anyanya fighters into an effective army (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). To do so, he needed cooperation and assistance of the Ethiopians. That meant that fighting as a secessionist movement was out of the question. Whether because of political pragmatism, or sincere belief, Garang guided the SPLM/A in fighting instead for a "New Sudan" a secular, multicultural and democratic state that would respect the rights of all people, a vision that also had the power to appeal to the disaffected and marginalized within the north, the east and the west, as well as in the South.

The war that began with the mutiny at Bor was more complex, bloody and destructive than the previous civil war. With the support of the Ethiopian government, the SPLA had a protected rear base in which to train new recruits, and to broadcast their propaganda radio station. By 1985,

most of South Sudan, with the exception of the garrison towns, was under the effective control of the SPLA (Collins, 2008). In the next three years even these began to fall to the SPLA, prompting the Khartoum government to arm *murabihin*, local militias made up of untrained, disgruntled Missiriya Arabs who had long feuded with Dinka to the south over water and grazing rights. In a pattern reminiscent of the slave raids of a century before, these militias systematically attacked civilians--burning villages, stealing their cattle, killing men, raping women women, and enslaving children (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). In an attempt to open up another front in the war, the government in Khartoum funneled arms to disaffected ethnic-based militias within South Sudan, and armed rebellions in neighboring countries—such as the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, and the EPLF and TPLF in Ethiopia—with the condition that they make the areas under their control inhospitable to the SPLA.

The SPLA Split

Though successful on the battlefield, tensions were rising within the SPLA. These had their basis in several interconnecting factors. The first was the persistence of ongoing disagreements about self-determination among the high leadership. Garang's demand for absolute obedience and complete control over the leadership made matters worse, as did his intolerance of any form of insubordination or dissent (D. H. Johnson, 2003; Rone et al., 1994). Another serious problem stemmed from the treatment of civilian populations at the hands of SPLA soldiers, especially in Equatoria where the SPLA was viewed as Dinka army. These tensions, while serious, remained simmering under the surface until 1991, when Ethiopia's communist Derg government fell to rebel forces that the SPLA has long helped to suppress. The SPLA lost its most critical ally, and the center of its operations. Forced to abandon its political headquarters in Addis Ababa, shutter its radio, and close down its training center, the SPLA leadership was shaken. Fearful of reprisals against the South Sudanese civilians living in several camps near the border, the SPLA also organized the

evacuation and repatriation of some 250,000 refugees back into South Sudan (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003).

Taking advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the loss of Ethiopian support, in August 1991 Riek Machar and Gordon Kong (both Nuer) and Lam Akol (a Shilluk), and announced the ouster of Garang (a Dinka) and claimed authority over the SPLA (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). Motivated as much by a desire to reform the SPLA as by personal ambition and ethnic rivalry, the three conspirators succeeded in luring many of their co-ethnics into rebellion, but few others. They failed, however, to capture Garang, who immediately disputed the claims of Akol and Machar (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003). Garang for his part, was successfully able to retain the support not just of his Dinka tribe, but also most Equatorians, leaving him in control over a much larger force. The Nasir faction, armed and funded by Khartoum, attacked, with disastrous consequences.

What began ostensibly as a political rivalry over the question of independence quickly turned into an ethnic conflict over the control of the SPLA. The indiscriminate violence against civilians of Garang's home area prompted thousands to flee to neighboring areas of South Sudan, as well as across borders (Collins, 2008; D. H. Johnson, 2003; Scroggins, 2011). The legacy of the SPLA split, as it has come to be known, has continued to affect South Sudanese politics to this day. Many of those that were internally displaced during that time have yet to return home, causing tension in host communities. Additionally the split introduced a new level of factionalism into what had been a comparably unified movement, schisms that were fed by funding and arms from Khartoum and from which the SPLM/A has never fully recovered (Hutchinson, 1996; Jok & Hutchinson, 1999).

At the time of the split, Garang had already moved his command operations to Eastern Equatoria, initially setting up a command base in Torit, which the SPLA had captured in 1989 (Rone et al., 1994). According to the Nasir faction's Newsletter, Garang didn't stay in Torit long, and was known to be in the Kidepo Valley where Chukudum is located at the time of the 1991 split

(SPLM/Nasir, 1992). By September 1991, Garang and other high ranking members of his faction chose to locate a number of bases and bush camps near the Didinga Hills because of the protection afforded by its mountainous terrain and its proximity to the Ugandan and Kenyan border (LeRiche & Arnold, 2012). When Kapoeta and Torit fell to the SAF in May and July 1992 (respectively), the SPLA Equatoria Command was moved to Chukudum, with additional bases in New Site and New Cush (both in what is now Budi county) directly adjacent to the border (LeRiche & Arnold, 2012). All locations were chosen for the protection they offered from SAF aerial bombardment.¹³

When residents of Chukudum refer to the arrival of in the area, it is usually in reference to this time. The relocation of the command structure of Garang's faction of the SPLA to Chukudum and the vicinity set off the first moment of displacement from the area, as a number of people chose move away from town to avoid the aerial bombings. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter five, many chose to seek the relative safety of the mountains in the first instance, and later moved on foot over the border to join the large number of South Sudanese arriving in the Kenyan border town of Lokichoggio. As the number of people grew through the later months of 1991 and early 1992, the Kenyan government in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) decided to set up a more permanent camp in Kakuma, a safer location further away from the border. I begin the story of my dissertation there, in the sections of Kakuma Refugee Camp where Didinga residents of Chukudum found refuge from the conflict that enveloped much of South Sudan for the next decade.

¹³ Chukudum was initially difficult for the SAF to bomb because it sits at the base of high mountains, and the other to locations were located directly on the border, meaning bombing there by SAF risked involving neighboring countries in the conflict. According to local oral history, the SAF only was able to successfully bomb the town after someone from the local community provided key intelligence reports about the local topography, prompting the military to use a different approach that allowed for better targeting of the bombs.

CHAPTER 2

SPACE: KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

ENCAMPMENT AND COMMODITY RELATIONS IN KAKUMA



Acacia fencing and gate, Kakuma
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the social regulation of space in Kakuma Refugee Camp, one of several camps to which Didinga people displaced from Chukudum during the second Sudanese civil war fled. My concern here is to understand the ways in which the socio-spatial organization of this refugee camp, has significantly reshaped the way a group of refugees relates to the basic activities that ensured survival for themselves and their families. I begin with a brief history of the Kakuma, the establishment of the camp and its relation to the surrounding area. I then consider the social

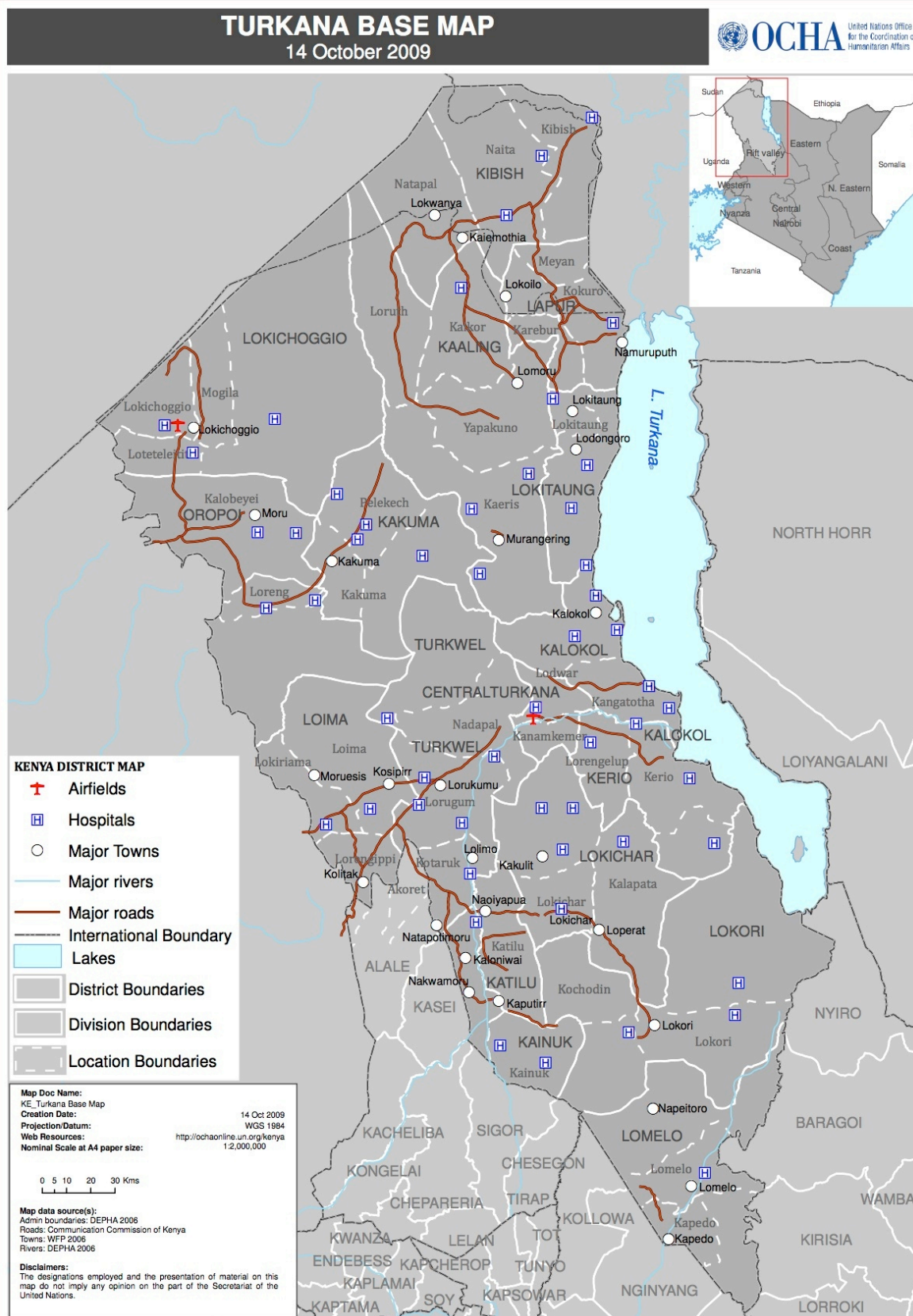
history of ‘the camp’ as a spatial technology of segregation and relate this to recent debates in political theory. Rather than a space of absolute exclusion and segregation, I show the materiality on which the spatialization of difference in Kakuma rests. By focusing on the material, I show that the camp is a place in which bodies, goods and ideas transit across spatial and categorical barriers. I look at three practices—headcounts, police roadblocks and host-refugee violence—through which variously positioned actors collectively policed space. While these practices keep refugees in the camp and local host populations out—they also link space to entitlements (to rations, environmental resources, and the authority to determine settlement and mobility) in ways that re-inscribes difference.

With a view towards understanding how the spatial technology of the refugee camp reshaped productive practices for Didinga refugees, I examine the ways in which camp life foreclosed refugees' opportunities to engage in many of the subsistence activities that previously sustained them. The provision of food assistance ensured survival, but it also divorced food from the productive activities of the beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, a process that resulted in the commoditization of food. I show that the deepening of commodity relations among Didinga refugees in the camp grew out of the specific ways that difference was both spatialized and made material.

THE HISTORY OF KAKUMA: TOWN AND CAMP

The Town

Kakuma is located in the sparsely populated northern district of Central Turkana, in Kenya’s Rift Valley Province. The town is situated in the middle territory of the Turkana, a marginalized and chronically under-served tribe practicing nomadic pastoralism. Even among East African pastoralist, the Turkana are known for their extreme mobility and their resistance to sedentarization (McCabe, 2004).



Map of Turkana District, (UNOCHA, 2009)

Historically, settlements in this region have been fairly small out-posts with few permanent residents. Far from the contentious tribal border zones with the Pokot to the southwest and the Toposa to the north, Kakuma is relatively safe from the constant threat of cattle raiding. However, the pasturage in the vicinity has never been sufficient to support high densities of livestock for extended periods of time (Okoti, Ng'ethe, & Ekaya, 2004). While the land in the area around Kakuma is relatively fertile compared with other areas in the district, the scarcity and variability of rainfall in the region also makes dry land cropping a risky endeavor.

According to McCabe (2004), permanent settlement among the Turkana is a relatively new phenomenon, which has its roots in a period of severe drought and increased raiding in the 1980s'. The resulting loss of stock caused half of the Turkana population to settle near famine relief camps during that period. Importantly, the town of Kakuma was one of several locations where the Kenyan government set up famine relief centers during that difficult time. While many returned to the pastoral sector afterwards, there was a residual population that remained permanently settled (McCabe, 2004, p. 213). This suggests that Kakuma already hosted a relatively high number of settled Turkana prior to the arrival of the refugees and the accompanying humanitarian presence. Still, it is important to recognize that before the establishment of the refugee camp, Kakuma's population was nevertheless not large by any measure—conflicting research places the number of residents somewhere between 2,000 to 8,000 people before 1992 (De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000; Ohta, 2005). Renewed famine in the 1990's in combination with the establishment of the refugee camp at Kakuma, no doubt subsequently attracted more Turkana to the area.

As the camp has grown, so too has the town. Local Turkana have been drawn to the camp as drought and raiding by neighboring ethnic communities have reduced herd size, necessitating a search for other means of subsistence (Okoti et al., 2004). While Turkana generally do not receive

direct support and assistance from the humanitarian sector in Kakuma, the camp has provided certain, albeit very limited benefits to the host population.¹⁴

Proximity to the camp has meant a deepening engagement with the market, as the collection of a large, concentrated population supplies a customer base for environmental resources which previously may have had little exchange value, or which had faced unattractive terms of trade with traders from the interior of Kenya (McCabe, 2004; Okoti et al., 2004). The emergence of this commercial trade has resulted in significant, and likely long lasting, degradation to savanna trees resulting from severe coppicing and deforestation. Turkana have also had some success in accessing formal employment opportunities related to the camp, though aside from a handful of teachers, these are often limited to lower skilled work as guards or temporary positions as manual laborers (Ohta, 2005).

The Camp

The camp itself was established after thousands of Southern Sudanese crossed into Kenya near the border town of Lokichoggio over several months in late 1991 early 1992. The arrival was prompted by the fall of the Derg in Ethiopia, where over 500,000 Southern Sudanese had been living in SPLA controlled camps in Gambella district (Allen & Turton, 1996; James, 1996; Scott-Villiers, P, & CP, 1993). Nearly overnight that camp had been emptied by order of the SPLA leadership leaving tens of thousands of refugees to walk over the border back into Southern Sudan (Allen & Turton, 1996). The evacuation of the refugees from the Gambella camps was complicated by a split in the SPLA leadership, which prompted a period of intense factional fighting in the area through which the refugees had to transit. Not all of the refugees from Gambella ended up in Kenya. However, those that arrived in Kakuma made their way on foot through the fighting, joined

¹⁴ Nevertheless, any benefits must be read against the loss of a critical dry-season grazing area and the environmental degradation due to increased pressure on the land resulting from the precipitous rise in population in the area. Commercial charcoal production has been particularly devastating to the dry scrub ecology in much of Turkana District (Okoth-Obbo, 2007: 269).

by many more who were displaced by the increasing violent attacks on the civilian population (Hecht, 2005). As the numbers of refugees arriving in Lokichoggio grew, the Kenyan government and UNHCR decided to arrange a more permanent place for them to stay, moving them to Kakuma a town more than 90km away from the border. This was done to ensure the safety of refugees from cross-border incursions and bombings and perhaps to limit the influence of the SPLA rebels in the new camp.

Since 1992, Kakuma has grown to house more than 100,000 refugees from 13 different countries of origin (IRIN, 2012). As it has grown, the original camp (known now as Kakuma I) has expanded by stages down the bank of an ephemeral river beyond the area originally set aside for refugee settlement with the establishment of Kakuma II and III. By mid-2010, when I arrived the camp was 11km tip to tail covering over 25 square kilometers (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2002).¹⁵

Theoretically, all camp residents are recognized refugees who have gone through some form of registration process with the Kenyan Government and the UNHCR. The reality, however, is somewhat different. While the majority of refugees in Kenya receive *prima facie*¹⁶ recognition of their status, this process varies over time and depends on events in a refugee's country of origin. New arrivals from Darfur or Somalia may be treated very differently from those from Ethiopia, Uganda or Southern Sudan. Similarly, as UNHCR has sought to avoid multiple registrations, groups of refugees that had received automatic recognition in the past now have to go through more

¹⁵ Since 2010, the camp's population has risen again due to a combination of increased numbers of Somali refugees relocated from the Dadaab complex in eastern Kenya, renewed inter-tribal violence in the state of Jonglei, and the border conflict between Sudan and South Sudan that began shortly after independence. In August 2012, the camp surpassed its 100,000 capacity for the first time. There are negotiations underway to create a new camp nearby (Nyabera, 2012).

¹⁶ *Prima facie* recognition of refugees is common in instances where there is a mass influx of refugees that have fled immediate attacks across an international border. In these cases, it is not feasible to conduct individual refugee status determination interviews with all those that have fled. Instead the UNHCR and host governments provide a more general recognition of refugee status that applies to whole groups of people (Rutinwa, 2002). Thus during the early years when Kakuma was first established, South Sudanese were recognized as refugees automatically because of their nationality and area of origin. At the time of my research (after the formal end of the war) however, new arrivals from South Sudan were being more rigorously screened to ensure that all met the criteria for being granted refugee status.

invasive biometric screening and more detailed interview process before being issued a ration card. At the time of my research, those seeking ration cards had to first register as new arrivals with the Camp Manager, a Kenyan government official, who would then put their names on a UNHCR intake list. Between a week to a couple of months later, those on the list would then be given interview appointments by the UNCHR where they would have to provide biometrics for verification and present briefly their reason for seeking refugee status. Some long-term residents continue to live in the camp well after their ration cards have been canceled, presumably for having missed a head-count, or occasionally by way of an administrative mistake. This means that the camp is home to more than just recognized refugees, though their numbers are hard to measure.

Kakuma I, the oldest section of the camp, was organized into groups of 30 to 50 families at the time of my visit¹⁷. Typically refugees from the same areas live together in these 'communities,' reflecting a concern on the part of camp planners with minimizing the cultural/identity loss so-often assumed to be central to the refugee experience. Because ethnically based factional fighting in Southern Sudan periodically spilled over into violence in the camp, Southern Sudanese refugees are spatially separated into three main groups: the Dinka, the Nuer (which are both ethnic groups) and the Equatorians, a geographical distinction encompassing people from the linguistically and ethnically diverse southern most areas of Southern Sudan in addition to some refugees from areas of northern Uganda that are culturally and linguistically similar. The organizing ethos of these groups is an approximation of the village, each with its own leadership structure.

¹⁷ After my return to the United States in late 2010, there were efforts to reassert control over the more organic organization of Kakuma I by the camp authorities. This included re-opening roads that had been closed to through traffic, or that had been incorporated into refugees' domestic living space. In addition, the organizational grid was remade with 'blocks' and 'zones' superseding 'groups' in official descriptions of the geography of the camp. This brought the older more chaotic parts of the camp into line with the more 'rational' organization ethos of Kakuma II and III. Socially, however group designations are still important nodes of identification for the refugees who I spoke with.



Map of Kakuma Refugee Camp (UNHCR, 2012)

There is typically one central water point, a meeting area and a collection of residential plots with low mud-brick houses, all surrounded by acacia thorn fencing. Perhaps an attempt to foster a sense of ‘community’ or neighborly feeling or to counteract the assumed alienation that rural villagers would feel to be living among so many different kinds of people, these groups are replicated again and again, a sort of village writ large that forms a dense urban space (Agier, 2002). Newer sections of the camp do not follow the same pattern, with mixed-origin groups and grid-like plot assignment becoming the norm.

One of the distinctive features of the camp is its constant mutability. This is especially apparent in the older portions of the camp. An ad-hoc solution to a temporary problem, the camp was never intended to last as long as it has (comparable to the Dadaab complex *pace* Agier, 2002). While plots may have originally been allocated on a grid, in the older parts of the camp only traces of that grid remain. Periodic floods displace whole sections of the camp, which then repopulate once the river shifts again. Similarly, inter-ethnic conflict both between refugees, and with local Turkana have prompted the gating of paths, which are closed and guarded once night falls. The temporary nature of mud-brick construction, vulnerable to flooding rains and the driving desert winds, means that there is a near constant rebuilding and re-bounding of domestic spaces in the camp. Fences are pushed out into unused paths to make way for a latrine, cooking shelter or a home for an expanding family; thoroughfares are blocked off or redirected to limit foot traffic. This re-ordering of domestic spaces inside the groups goes on largely without the involvement of the camp agencies and officials, who intervene only when conflicts arise that are not resolved through informal mediation with the help of refugee leadership structures.

As individuals and whole groups leave the camp, either for resettlement or repatriation, others have moved in to take their place. And so the area where the famous Sudanese ‘lost boys’¹⁸ once stayed now mainly hosts new arrivals from Somalia. Even the schools have been constantly on the move, new campuses constructed in the ephemeral moments where Kakuma was flush with funding. Old buildings, abandoned, were stripped of all that was valuable that could be spirited away leaving only the walls. With the end of the conflict in Southern Sudan in 2005, UNHCR began making preparations to close the camp on the assumption that Southern Sudanese (the majority of camp residents at that time) would return en masse. They closed schools and reduced staffing. But deteriorating conditions in Somalia has meant that, despite more than more than 35,000 Sudanese departures between 2005-10, the camp has begun to grow again. In the newer extensions of the camp (Kakuma II & III) more effort has been made to design camp space along a grid pattern.

Most Didinga people living in Kakuma have been recognized by UNHCR and the Kenyan Government as prima-facie refugees. They share this space with an unknown number of unofficial residents. A significant minority are living in the camp who do not have status, either because their ration cards have been canceled, they are more recent arrivals, or because they previously repatriated and had to turn in their ration cards. Since Chukudum is only a days travel away, a constant stream of temporary visitors from home are also present in the camp. The majority of Didinga residents live in one of five or six groups near distribution center one (Kakuma I), which they share with a handful of families from Acholiland in northern Uganda.

The camp is designed to provide support for basic subsistence to the categorically validated ‘refugee’ in possession of a ration card. In addition to permission to settle on land in the camp, the UNHCR, the World Food Program and various partner agencies support refugees with goods,

¹⁸ The “lost boys” are a group of young boys (and girls) who arrived in Kakuma as unaccompanied minors in 1991 and 1992. Many, though certainly not all, had been part of the “Red Army,” that had trained in Ethiopia (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1994).

services and infrastructure. These goods and services are provided directly by the UN or through INGO and religious partner agencies.¹⁹ WFP food distributions are scheduled every 16 days. Firewood, in contrast, is given out monthly. Construction materials (poles, iron-sheet, tarpaulins) are periodically distributed to long-term residents after housing quality assessments. New arrivals automatically receive this benefit so long as they agree to live in the newer, mixed areas of the camp. At scale of the residential group, each has a community water point that provides clean, treated water for one hour twice daily. Most water points are also equipped with a cement overflow reservoir to keep the surrounding area from flooding. In some of the residential groups, the surplus water used by residents to water small gardens.

Camp residents without ration cards are usually supported in some way by family members or neighbors, who often share prepared food and housing with them. This kind of sharing is nearly universal among the Didinga residents in the camp. There is significant level of support between neighbors and relatives. This takes many forms, the most prominent being the sharing of food. Adjacent households will exchange small portions of their nightly meals, diversifying the daily consumption. Household items are passed back and forth across fences, and often two or more households may partially share hearths to conserve firewood and charcoal, which are always in short supply.

WHAT IS A CAMP?

The typical imaginary of a refuge camp is rows upon rows of neatly ordered tents, with the letters UNHCR emblazoned on them in UN light blue. Discursively, camps are conceived of as temporary places of shelter, places that provide refuge from nature, or stopping places for rest and recuperation in a longer onward journey. But contemporary refugee camps are a far cry from this

¹⁹ These include Lutheran World Fellowship, CARE, GTZ, National Council of Churches Kenya (NCCK), Don Bosco's (affiliated with the Catholic Church), Winrock and Film Aid among others. The UN's World Food Program provides food for bi-weekly distributions with the help of refugee incentive workers.

romantic ideal. With some reaching nearly 100,000 residents housed in semi-permanent mud brick buildings, and with many persisting for decades, these places of refugee accommodation are more like low sprawling cities than camps.

Since their inception, refugee camps have emerged as spatial technology that seeks to manage and contain cross border migrations of needy people (Agier, 2002; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hyndman, 2000). While the emergence of refugee camps can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II, they proliferated in response to 'mass influx' events in the global south. In Africa, refugee camps were established to accommodate large numbers of people displaced by the conflicts that accompanied decolonization. Though encampment can be read as strategy of humanitarian engagement and assistance, it also reflects the interests of both states and humanitarian agencies for whom the concentration and segregation of refugees are politically and logistically expedient (Agier, 2002; Bookman, 2002; Hyndman, 2000; Jacobsen, 2005; Loescher & Milner, 2005).

Despite criticism, the use of encampment as a solution to the refugee 'problem' has only deepened in the last three decades (Jacobsen, 2005). In the 1980s, the bi-polar logic of the cold war began to give way and the ideological benefit gained from accepting refugees waned, just as changes in global transportation facilitated the movement of people from the global south to Europe and North America (Chimni, 1998). At the same time, an ascendant politics of economic liberalization combined with increasing concern on behalf of the global north with rising levels of unplanned, irregular migration. Together, these factors prompted the development of more restrictive migration policies—including visa regimes, carrier sanctions and increased border policing—across Europe and North America (Barnett, 2001; Black, 2001; Castles, 2004; Gibney, 2005; Hammerstad, 2000). By preventing arrivals, states can successfully limit their responsibilities under international law toward refugees and asylum seekers. Not wishing to seem uncharitable, countries of the industrialized 'global north' have compensated by committing to increased humanitarian assistance

in the regions of origin. In effect, this constellation of policy dispositions has resulted in a drive toward the containment of poverty and need in the global south (Duffield, 2007; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Jacobsen, 2005). In the contemporary geo-political climate, refugee camps emerge as a political technology through which refugees are *warehoused*—their lives maintained by international humanitarian assistance, while at the same time they are excluded from pursuing their broader aspirations (Loescher & Milner, 2005; M. Smith, 2006). While camp life is not quite the ‘let die’ biopolitics Tanya Li (2010) describes, many of those living in refugee camps around the world face the “stealthy kind of violence that consigns large numbers of people to lead short and limited lives” (Li, 2010, p. 67) that she identifies. The persistence of refugee camps, then, must be viewed in light of contemporary geopolitical concerns that seek to contain the un-managed migration of needy people in the borderlands of the global south.

The spatial technology of the ‘camp’ extends far beyond refugee confinement, joined discursively by other kinds of camps—notably the concentration camp and the prison camp. In discussing these other kinds of camps, political philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005) argues that the ‘camp’ has become the fundamental bio-political paradigm of modern politics. Under this reading, the camp is a particular kind of place—a space of exception—which, despite being under the direct physical control of the state, is removed from normal rules governing state action, condemning those residing there to an socially unvalued life (Agamben, 1998; 2005).

In geography, a number of scholars have built upon Agamben’s work to critically examine spatialities of exception (Darling, 2009; Franke, 2009; Gregory, 2004; Minca, 2007; Mountz, 2011; Ramadan, 2009). As Ramadan (2009) and Darling (2009) point out, the discursive equation of refugee camps and the concentration camps as ‘spaces of exception’ may be analytically productive in some aspects, but deeply problematic in others (both analytically and politically). One aspect worth mentioning is that while refugees and asylum seekers are generally excluded from rights

pertaining to nationals, they are also subjects of international law, which insists that their lives are to be protected and sustained. Likewise, by focusing unduly on the sovereign act, such an equation works to obscure the everyday, embodied micro-political activities that produce camp space. In such an analytic, it is too easy to see camps as wholly segregated off from everyday life. What is missed in this conceptualization is the very materiality of any particular camp and the intimacy brought by proximity. Camps are made by, and made up of a constellation of social and material relations. Rather than a space of exception where residents are relegated to abject existence, the camp emerges instead as a nexus of interconnection in which bodies, goods and ideas are constantly moving across spatial and categorical barriers.

As this suggests, refugee camps are sites of intense and often contested bio- and geo-politics. Meant to foster vulnerable life, the camps also bring into proximity very distinct categories of people. In her study centered on the Dadaab complex of camps in northeastern Kenya, Hyndman explores the changing geopolitics of refugee assistance as it emerged in the 1990's. She draws our attention to the ways in which “the process and criteria that spatially separate distinct groups [are] based on their rank in tacit cultural and political hierarchies” (Hyndman, 2000 p. xxi). Hyndman's work explores the hierarchical relations between humanitarian workers and those they assist, grounding these relations both in the geopolitics of humanitarian interventionism, and the biopolitical imperative to enumerate refugee camp residents as a population. Hyndman details the ways in which sovereign power is differentially enforced with respect to two kinds of migrants: highly mobile aid workers possessing a kind of supra-citizenship that allows them to traverse borders with little care on the one hand, and refugees who, as sub-citizens, are subject to efforts of control and containment on the other (Hyndman, 2000). Hyndman's argument is largely geopolitical in orientation, paying less attention to the material consequences of the social relations and material practices that spring out of encampment.

My research on the social relations surrounding Kakuma suggests that the camp formation fundamentally reshapes the material practices not only of refugees and humanitarian workers, but also the communities that host them. The economic dynamics of refugee-host relations have been taken by a number of scholars of refugee policy (Brees, 2008; Callamard, 1994; De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000; Jacobsen, 2005; Porter, Hampshire, Kyei, & Adjaloo, 2008; Wilson, 1992). However the focus of this research has often been towards identifying 'best practices,' 'winners' and 'losers,' or towards documenting the economic benefits that hosting refugees can have on local and national economies in an attempt to influence host country public opinion or refugee policy makers (Brees, 2008; Jacobsen, 2005; Wilson, 1992). Research with refugees has historically been based in advocacy and refugee rights protection. Such a 'rights based approach' to refugee research seeks to point out instances where the facts on the ground of specific refugee situations do not meet with international or national legal standards, in an effort to improve refugee well being. Many have sought to reshape common popular perceptions of refugees as 'dependent' or as people who cheat the system, by showing 'negative coping strategies'—sale of rations, ration card fraud, illegal resource extraction, and so forth—to be rational responses to the economic circumstances of their lives in the camps (Koenig & Dube, 2005). The agendas of refugee scholars and advocates have a significant impact on the ways in which refugee practices are discussed. The politically charged nature of refugee accommodation means that research on these topics must always be read against the contemporary political climate.

While some generalities can be made about camp economies, it is important to trace the specific histories of the productive practices of both camp residents and host populations in order to understand the form that trade between these groups takes. Though nearly two decades old now, Callamard's (1994) work on host-refugee trading relations in Luwani, Malawi is by far the most careful examination in this regard. Her work explores the deepening of market-based relations that

accompanied arrival of the camp and refugees, with an attention to its roots in previous productive relations in the host area. She linked the monetization of exchange that occurred there to structural limitations of camp-host relations, notably the inadequacy of food-aid provided to refugees and the remoteness from regional trading centers, which had previously discouraged commodity production by the local host population (Callamard, 1994, p. 60). The creation of the camp and the consequent rise in population drew the area more deeply into national and cross border trade networks.

Like Callamard, I seek to trace the historically contingent social and material relations that have shaped the refugee-host trading interaction. In many ways, the situation of the Turkana host population in northern Kenya, where Kakuma is located, is similar to that of Mwanza district in Malawi. Both areas are located in remote border regions with a history of marginalization and underdevelopment. Both host populations engaged predominantly in subsistence based livelihoods. In Kakuma however, the Turkana's subsistence base is pastoralism rather than agriculture, a fact, which, as I will show, has impacted the kinds of social, and exchange relations entered into in and around Kakuma refugee camp.

In the next section, I begin by sketching out the spatial logic of Kakuma Refugee Camp, in order to tease out the complexity of the social and material relations that produce the camp as a space of segregation. In doing so, I consider the ways in which material practices have been shaped by the categories—refugee, host population, humanitarian worker—of humanitarian assistance. In particular, I focus on how various groups have enlisted space in the policing of these social boundaries. This analysis in turn forms the backbone of the following chapter, which explores the spaces of exchange and production in order to bring out how such spatialized categorical divisions structure these relations.

BODIES AND BOUNDARIES

Despite the fact that refugee camps are spaces of containment where refugees are separated out from the national population to be monitored and assisted, there is a surprising amount of traffic in and out of Kakuma. On the books, Kenya presents itself as having one of the more restrictive policies on refugee movement. But enforcement is lax and corruption entrenched, leaving some flexibility in the legal limitations on refugee movement. This means that refugees in Kenya have some possibility to move in and out of the camp—though, as I will show, there are many factors that keep them from actually doing so.

On the flip side, a daily influx of local Turkana and itinerant clothing vendors canvass the roads and paths of the camp. So, while in some ways residents of Kakuma are restricted from Kenyan national space, the spatial distinction is in fact much more porous. Kakuma is instead a locus of interconnection, where bodies are constantly moving across spatial and categorical boundaries. Still, for most residents I spoke with, trips outside the boundary of the camp were rare, and occasions of anxiety. Given the relatively lax enforcement I look at a several factors—headcounts, police roadblocks and refugee-host violence—that worked to re-inscribe the categorical difference between (Sudanese) refugees and Kenyans and how this was enacted spatially.

Head Counts

Rumors of an imminent headcount reached me months before I was to set foot in the camp. A few days prior to Christmas 2009, just a few weeks after my arrival in Chukudum, I sat with a young man, one of several who had recently returned from Kakuma for the holidays. Our conversation soon turned to the recently completed registration process for the national elections:

Leonie: So you came back to register for the elections?

Samson: Of course, we have to come back. This is not something we can miss.

Leonie: Will you stay here until April, or will you go back to Kakuma?

- Samson: I must go back. I'm in a training program at Don Boscos. Besides I heard that there will be a head count soon. Of course UNHCR will do it when many of us have traveled to be at home. They must! Then they can cancel our ration cards, and we will have to leave.
- Leonie: Do you really think they would do that?
- Samson: Yes, yes, of course they will. They have been wanting the Sudanese to go home for a long time. That is why they closed the schools—to push us to go home.
- Leonie: But you will come again in April? Even if it means your card will be cancelled?
- Samson: Yes. I will come, no matter what. I cannot miss this.

(Fieldnotes, 12/ 23/2009; Chukudum)

Geographer Jennifer Hyndman (2000) described the hierarchical and dehumanizing relations that are at work in the use of headcounts, in her book on refugee management in Dadaab, Kenya. She examined the practices through which the UNHCR corrals refugees in an effort to root out refugee fraud and collect accurate figures on camp populations. Headcounts are, then, an extreme and embodied spatialization of the categorical distinctions between refugees and those that assist them (Hyndman, 2000). Yet in my research, I found that headcounts had a more diffuse and pervasive impact, which was just as effective at fixing refugees in place and containing their movement. As noted by Hyndman, the UNHCR is very secretive in planning these sporadic events, meaning the specter of missing a headcount was ever present in the minds of refugees traveling outside of the camp (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008).

As my conversation with Samson demonstrates, headcounts were seen by refugees as moments of danger in which their status might be revoked for what they saw as illegitimate reasons. In particular, South Sudanese refugees were skeptical of the timing of this headcount, which they saw as an attempt by UNHCR to control the movements of refugees at an especially sensitive political moment. Some speculated that the headcount would correspond with the upcoming

national election in Sudan (conducted in April 2010), thus disqualifying those refugees that made the effort to return to their home areas, temporarily, to vote.

The cynicism of this account was common and rooted in experience. Several young people I met in Chukudum had had their ration card canceled while they were attending secondary school in Nairobi or Kitale. Many of these young people had been selected for scholarships to attend boarding school upon completion of their primary exit exams by a Catholic nun working with Sudanese refugees in the camp. Taken as minors from the camp, none I spoke to had been aware that permission to live outside of the camp had not been obtained, or that their absence from the camp would jeopardize their rights to hold ration cards:

I went to school in Nairobi, with those of Sister Louise. There were many of us (from Budi County) there, together... When I finished secondary, I came to Kakuma. I wasn't thinking to go back to Budi, but I arrived and found that my name had been canceled...I told them I was schooling in Nairobi but they told me that I didn't get permission. I tried to get a new card on my own, but they wouldn't allow it.

Lokonyon 22 male (Chukudum)

Upon graduation, many returned to the camps to find that they were no longer included on their families' ration cards, and that they were barred from registering independently because they had missed previous counts. Since their biometric data was already on file, they were prevented from re-registering or registering under a new name. Some of these young people decided to return to Southern Sudan to try their luck at finding employment, while others stayed on in the camps, living off assistance from their family and neighbors:

I had a ration card at first, but when I left to Nairobi for some reasons, I came back and found it had been cancelled... It is of course very hard to live here with out a card, but at least I am safe.

Napeyok, 21 female (Kakuma)

In Kakuma, I spoke with a number of others who had cards cancelled while home for funerals, or while seeking specialized medical attention in Kitale or Nairobi. The effect of these cancellations

upon the community was to discourage trips outside of the camp, especially when headcounts were assumed to be imminent. When trips were undertaken, anxiety about the possibility of missing a headcount caused people to limit the amount of time spent away and make sure to maintain active communication with people in the camp through cell-phones or long distance radio.

More than nine months after I first heard the rumor of an impending headcount at Kakuma, I returned to the camp for a second time. I arrived just as Nancy, my host during the first visit was preparing to return to South Sudan for a short trip to see her mother. The headcount still had not happened. She was nervously making calculations about her visit, wondering if she should wait for the count and then go—a delay that would potentially mean being in Southern Sudan during the uncertain time leading up to the up-coming referendum—or if she should take the risk that the count might be announced while she was away, causing her to cut short her trip and potentially miss actually seeing her mother who lived in a remote area without vehicle access or cell phone coverage. In the end she decided to take the risk of missing the count, leaving a few days after my arrival. Many others did not feel they could take that kind of risk, and therefore never ventured outside of the direct vicinity of the camp. For Nancy the choice turned out to be a good one in the end; the headcount finally happened in late November 2010, a few weeks after she returned from her trip and nearly a year after I first heard rumors about it.

As this discussion shows, the spatial effect of headcounts lies well beyond the immediate practices of corralling and bodily counting refugees. The ever-present possibility of a new count worked as a specter to keep refugees close to the camp. At the same time, these headcounts enacted another form of spatialization—that of exclusion. Periodic verifications resulted in the removal of names from official ration-lists, revoking access to food and other services for those whose presence in the camp was outside of the specific humanitarian mandate.

Much more than a bio-political tool used to know and appropriately govern a refugee population, headcounts are also productive of the kind of internal self-governing of behaviors inherent in Foucault's concept of 'governmentality,' (Hyndman, 2000). Governmentality can be defined as a mode of power that both constitutes a population through particular forms of knowledge (bio-politics), and that seeks to shape the conduct of that population (Foucault, 2007). Foucault argues that policies, such as headcounts, which have at their heart the need to surveil, count and discipline a population, are also productive of particular modes of thought and self-regulation that make the actual exercise of this kind of sovereign power superfluous (Foucault, 2007).

In the camp, the practice of keeping the timing of headcounts and other forms of verification secret may have been born out of a desire to curb assumed abuse or 'gaming of the system' by refugees, however refugees saw more sinister motives. Regardless, the possibility of being struck from the official rolls hangs over any refugee that might have good reasons leave the camp. In this regard, rumors (or threats) of impending headcounts work as well as the event itself to contain refugees in the camp, and little appears to be done by camp officials to counter false claims of impending counts. While some refugees routinely risk having their ration card cancelled by traveling outside the immediate area of the camp, the vast majority feel pressure to remain close to the camp in case a head count is called. Importantly, in this context the policies that produce refugees as self-governing subject have as their goal the enactment of particular material relations effected through the matching of particular entitlements to particular bodies by means of categorization. And while headcounts constitute refugees as self-governing subjects and achieve compliance through voluntary action, other boundary-enforcing practices have more immediate and material consequences.

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Kitu Kidogo

As I noted previously, official policies on refugee movement in Kenya are quite restrictive. Refugees wanting to travel away from the camp must first seek permission from the camp manager, who is a Kenyan government official, as well as the UNHCR. The process is long and decision-making opaque. Leave is given only to those whose travel is deemed by these authorities as justified. Typically passes are reserved for sponsored specialized medical treatment, or if the refugee is going to school. All requests for travel permits must include documented proof of the necessity of travel, and often times the paperwork does not come through until well after the intended travel date. Those caught traveling without a UNCHR travel document are faced with potential deportation, as refugees outside of the camp are considered to be illegally present in the country. In Kenya, consistent enforcement, however, is not a high priority for government and police. Nairobi hosts a large population of urban refugees, most notably Somalis but also a significant Sudanese presence. With the exception of periodic raids and round-ups, such as the one that occurred in Eastleigh—a Somali neighborhood in Nairobi—in December 2010, Kenyan officials generally tolerate the refugee presence in Nairobi.²⁰

While movement away from the camps is forbidden under Kenyan law, it is more accurate to state that refugee mobility is hampered rather than outright restricted by state action. Given the gap between policy and enforcement, it is important to examine the ways in which the state is made in practice through embodied individuals acting on behalf of government institutions (Herbert, 1997; Mountz, 2004; 2010). As Mountz writes, “...the state is an idea that is imagined, shared and performed by a set of institutional actors with powerful material consequences...” (Mountz, 2010).

²⁰ For example, in December 2010, police conducted a raid on the predominantly Somali Eastleigh neighborhood in Nairobi in response to a grenade attack. More than 300 people were indiscriminately rounded up and questioned about their immigration status. These included neighborhood residents, shopkeepers, restaurant patrons, and passers-by. Several were later found to be Kenyan Citizens (BBC, 2010).

In Kenya, the police are the institutional actors that regulate refugee movement. Low pay for the police breeds rampant corruption; the salary for the lowest ranking officers in 2010 was just above 20,000 KSh /month. For each taxi stopped carrying refugees moving illicitly, police manning a road block could easily net 1400 KSh and potentially much more in bribe money. A lack of accountability for misdeeds combines with the specific legal vulnerability of traveling refugees to produce a lucrative side-business for many police officers working the area around Kakuma.

Roadblocks and shakedowns proliferate on the roadways leading away from the refugee camp. Sudanese refugees seeking to travel between the camp and the border, or to larger towns like Kitale and the capital Nairobi must endure a gauntlet of police roadblocks. Singled out for their distinct appearances—very dark skin, height and, often, ritual scarifications—Sudanese refugees are particularly vulnerable to shakedowns since they have a hard time passing for Kenyan. Failure to produce proper documentation (either a valid visa, or a letter from the UNHCR authorizing travel) is repaid with requests for *chai* (tea) or *kitu kidogo* (a little something). While individual bribes are often small—perhaps 200 KSh (US \$1.50)—the cumulative effect of paying off police at several roadblocks can add significantly to the cost of travel. By way of an example, the passage in a shared taxi from Kakuma to Lokichoggio is between 600-1000 KSh. With three roadblocks along the way *kitu kidogo* may add up to 600 KSh, doubling the price of the journey. Occasionally, lack of bribe money can leave travelers stranded in remote areas without the funds to get them back to the camp.

The road between Kakuma and Lokichoggio, near the Sudanese border, is particularly notorious for the number of police roadblocks. In recent years, security in this region has been beefed up, due in part to cross-border raiding activities between the Toposa (on the Sudanese side) and the Turkana (on the Kenyan side). But the two countries are also in a border dispute, which further increases the militarization of the area. Each time I traveled this stretch of road, my taxi was

stopped at least three times for police inspection. Conversations with refugees and local Turkana confirmed that this was typical.

This state of affairs can prompt creative efforts to get around paying bribes to the police. A common way that Sudanese refugees avoided paying bribes, or lowered the amount requested was to lie about the purpose of their trip and their destinations. The stories they told depended on whether they were leaving the camp to cross back into Sudan or re-entering Kenya after a time at home. When I traveled this road the first time with several acquaintances, some of my travel-mates were able to avoid having to pay the police, even though they didn't have the required travel permits. During the stop, the police had taken two young women to the back of the vehicle after they were unable to produce the proper paperwork. I hung back, not wanting to interfere with the interactions, fearing that they might be asked for a larger amount because of their association with a white foreigner. When we returned to the vehicle and got underway again I asked:

Léonie: What happened? Did you have to pay something?

Nyala: Oh, no. Not this time.

Léonie: They just let you go?

Achi: We told them we were going to our Uncle's funeral, and that we didn't even have enough money to complete the journey.

Nyala: That is the easiest way. They may keep you for some time, but they will let you go through eventually.

Reciting pitiful stories was a common strategy to get out of a bribe, especially when traveling away from the camp, towards the Sudanese border.

Another creative strategy that was common practice among young people was to wear school uniforms when they traveled. Two teenaged brothers explained to me that wearing a uniform made their stories of their need to travel home to collect school fees from parents or relatives living in South Sudan more credible in the eyes of the Kenyan police and immigration officers at the border. Some even took up traveling in school uniforms even when they were no longer in school.

Because many South Sudanese experienced entered school at older ages than was typical in Kenya, posing as a ‘school boy’ could be successful even for adults into their mid-twenties.

When crossing back across the border into Kenya after a visit home, it was common practice for Sudanese refugees to buy a tourist visa and lie about their destination.²¹ Many felt that this was a safer and easier option compared to stating their intention to return to Kakuma for several interconnected reasons. The most important was that admitting to being a refugee or intending to register at the camp risked that a traveler would be denied entry, even though this practice violates Kenyan national and international refugee law. After discussing my project with the Camp Manager (CM), she recounted the following story:

Camp Manager: I went to the border at Nadapal and listened to what they said—I’m going to Lodwar, to Kitale, to Kakuma, give me a couple of weeks, no make it a month. I need to do this... (pauses)...and then the next week I see them here asking to register.

Léonie: But this is normal, they need to get across the border.

Camp Manager: Yes but the way they are talking and then they come here asking to register. And they like to go back and celebrate. Like for Easter—a bunch of Didinga went back to celebrate. And on the way back they were singing on the bus. They were turned back.

(Fieldnotes 05/13/2010, Kakuma)

Even refugees were allowed to re-enter Kenya, not having the visa left travelers open to police extortion on the journey back to the camp. In addition, low literacy among south Sudanese refugees meant that many were unable to read the alternative papers given to them by Kenyan immigration officials. This provided additional opportunities for police extortions, as it was common practice for borders officials to place conditions on the south Sudanese traveling across the border—for example to restrict their permission to stay to the border town of Lokichoggio, or to limit the visa validity to 3 days. Weighing the risk of denial against the cost of the tourist visa, refugees I spoke to

²¹ The cost of a tourist visa to Kenya was US \$25 at the time of my research. It was raised to \$50 in 2011.

preferred to ask and pay for the visa as it offered more protection and flexibility if they planned to spend any time outside of the camp.

Some people went to greater lengths avoid having to contribute for chai, including doctoring up another person's travel document by affixing a new photo. Some of these efforts were more effective than others as this excerpt from my field journal demonstrates:

We come to a stop where several large rocks have been laid across the roadway. Three police officers, dressed in khaki camouflage emerge from a small shack at the shoulder of the road and approach our vehicle. Through the front passenger window, an officer asks for papers from a tall thin dark skinned man, with the v-shaped scars that mark him as a Dinka Bor. Another approaches my window:

Officer 2: Passport please

I hand it to him, as third officer asks for the papers of the woman sitting behind the driver. After a short moment, the first officer motions for the man to get out of the vehicle. At this signal we open the doors to the crowded taxi. The Dinka man from the front seat gets out, but the well-dressed woman next to him stays inside. The toddler next to me begins to wail (again), and I climb out of the hot and stuffy vehicle, stepping into an argument between the Dinka man from the front seat and one of the officers, who is holding a plasticized I.D. and a sheet of paper with a photo glued to it. The officer with my passport hands it back to me, and takes the papers from the other officer.

Officer 1: Whose papers are these?

Dinka man: They are mine, look at the picture! You can see it is me.

The officer holding the papers turns to me and says

Officer 2: Look at this! He just glued his picture here, you can see. There is no red ink here on the photo where the official stamp is. It should continue here (pointing to the photo).

Me: Well maybe it has rubbed off?

The officer takes the ID card, and shows it to me

Officer 2: No. No. Look here.

Me: It says he is a student. What is wrong with that?

Officer 2: Look at the name, and you can see the picture is the same one (as is on the first paper).

Me: Ok?

Officer 2: The name is not the same. You see! He has just stuck his photo on this paper from someone else. He is trying to cheat us.

While we are talking, the first officer has taken the man to the back of the vehicle, and asks him remove his luggage. He calls out to the officer speaking with me, who follows taking the papers. They all enter into the police shelter together.

The taxi driver lights up a cigarette. The third officer stays with the vehicle. He pulls out a cell phone and begins fiddling with it, leaning on the roof of the car. A few minutes pass. The driver walks to the police shelter and returns. We continue to wait. A few more minutes pass, and the Dinka man emerges. He picks up his luggage and returns it to the trunk. We all stuff ourselves back into the vehicle. The driver turns the ignition and we pull away from the roadblock. The Dinka man is seething:

Dinka man: Fifty dollars. I had to give them fifty dollars!

(Fieldnotes, 09/25/10)

As this incident shows, the penalty for being caught in a lie significantly increased the amount required to allow a journey to continue.²² Still other travelers have been detained and not allowed to go on. They are left at the roadside with uncertain prospects, their fates at the complete discretion of the police. Reports of detentions and illegal deportations of refugees along this stretch of road were significant enough to prompt the UNHCR to intervene with a sensitization campaign aimed at educating Kenyan police in the border region about the rights of refugees under international law (Interview, 06/07/2010; Kakuma).

As with headcounts, bribe paying limited refugee movement outside the immediate vicinity of the camp. The financial burden of paying to get past police road blocks meant that most refugees chose not to travel often. South Sudanese refugees were acutely aware that they were particularly vulnerable because of misplaced assumptions about their wealth and because of their inability to pass as Kenyan. While some refugees traveled frequently from the camp to their home areas for personal visits or as traders, the vast majority of Didinga camp residents limited their travel to

²² Compared with people of other nationalities, Sudanese are seen to be more likely to be able to pay these higher bribes because of the comparative strength of the Sudanese currency and more plentiful opportunities to earn salaries in US dollars by working with humanitarian agencies and NGOs. I will talk more about this in Chapter 4.

emergency trips and occasionally religious holidays. On the other hand, rather than enforcing a categorical ban on refugee travel, Kenyan national police took advantage of the specific vulnerabilities of this population to extract material benefits. Though this meant that more refugees were able to travel out side of the camp, refugees' exclusion from Kenyan national territory was continually reiterated through these unofficial policing practices.

Beating the Bounds

Even within the area immediately surrounding Kakuma, movements outside the boundary of the camp were also curtailed. Typically, these were reserved for trips to the UNHCR compound or the Camp Manager's office, or occasionally to make purchases not possible in the camp. At a finer scale than what I have just described, tense relations between refugees and Turkana circumscribed movement even further. Turkana have been active in maintaining their control over environmental resources in the area around the camp, and restrictions on the rights of refugees to access them have been won first through violence and then through negotiation (Aukot, 2003).

During the early years after the camp was established, restrictions on land and resources had not yet been established leading to violent confrontation between Turkana hosts and refugees. These conflicts occurred most notably over fuel-wood and fencing materials, which also provided important fodder for Turkana livestock (Aukot, 2003; Okoti et al., 2004). Turkana actively intervene to discourage refugees from foraging for wood outside the boundaries of the camp. Confronted by the perpetual lack of firewood, I asked Lokwar, my research assistant why people didn't collect their own firewood.

If you touch even a small twig, you can be sure that someone will come to ask you about it. It is really not safe to collect anything from outside of the camp. Long ago we used to, but there were problems between the refugees and Turkana. Since that time, we do not go out to collect wood.

(Fieldnotes: 05/29/2010; Kakuma)

Didinga refugees felt that their actions outside of the camp are monitored by Turkana, they and would never consider collecting wood there. The ad-hoc nature of this arrangement becomes clear when the situation of wood-gathering in Kakuma is compared to the Dadaab Camps in the Northeast of the country where wood gathering by refugees is a common, if still risky, practice (Horst, 2008; Hyndman, 2000). In an effort to reduce tensions, camp authorities introduced monthly fuel-wood distributions, and refugees in Kakuma were able to retain the rights to trees within the camp (nearly all are now heavily coppiced, or have been cut down). Tree planting initiatives have since been introduced by one of the NGOs, providing free seedlings to all comers. Still the program does little to increase fuel wood supply in the short term, because the dry climactic conditions limit the number of trees that can be sustained in the area, and because it also takes several years for these trees to mature to the point at which it is possible to harvest their wood for fuel.

Similarly, the sale of livestock to refugees and their re-theft by Turkana resulted in an informal arrangement that bars refugees from keeping most kinds of stock in the camp, unless for immediate slaughter (Aukot, 2003). Fowl were excepted; many refugees kept ducks and pigeons for both personal consumption and sale. I became acutely aware of this prohibition on one of my return trips to the camp. A neighbor, Eunice, had bought a small goat-kid to fatten for Christmas and to celebrate the birth of her first son after a long period of barrenness. Great lengths were taken to keep the knowledge of the goat's presence from becoming broadly known. The goat was kept only in areas where it would not be visible from the main road as well as the internal footpaths of the residential group. The goat was fed mostly on kitchen scraps and leftovers. Eunice's children and their friends made a game of seeking out forage for the goat from the trees and fencing materials. When they went outside of the residential group (though still inside the boundaries of the camp), they were heavily scolded for bringing too much attention to its presence. The children's

punishment considered necessary, an act undertaken to protect them because of the more serious consequences that might befall them if they ventured further afield and were caught by the Turkana.

For Turkana, violence was a means to reestablish their rights over land and resources and a way to protect their very limited opportunities for income generation. But it wasn't only the Turkana host population that resorted to the use of violence in order to police the spatial and material boundaries of the camp. On the flip side, concern about Turkana thefts and intrusions into domestic spaces inside the camp, prompted increased fencing especially along the edges of each 'group.' Many residential groups are now gated, with refugee/residents posted as guards after nightfall. Though it is not permitted for refugees to keep weapons in the camp, Kenyan police do not typically operate in the camp after dusk. In many of the Didinga residential groups, guards carry pangas (machetes) and makeshift bows on their patrols. In addition, to prevent conflict and ensure the safety of refugees and agency personnel, Kenyan police sweep the major roads at dusk, requiring all non-refugees that they encounter to leave the camp. Mistrust and suspicion is rife on both sides. Japanese anthropologist Ohta (2005) reports that the Turkana he knew felt ill at ease when moving within the camps and took steps to protect themselves, for example by traveling in groups.

The combination of these boundary maintenance practices—headcounts, bribery, and inter-community violence—results in the spatialization of the categorical distinctions between Kenyans and refugees, which are based in law and policy. Within this constellation, refugees are 'encouraged' to remain within the bounds of the camp, rewarded with entitlements to food, medical attention, education and other services. On the other hand, Kenyan nationals are excluded from these entitlements through periodic head-counts and other forms of agency 'verification.' In response to this exclusion, local Turkana have successfully articulated their claims to a monopoly on environmental resources in the area around the camp, enacting an exclusion of their own. National

police are enlisted on both sides to keep these spaces separate, sweeping the camps a night for unauthorized Kenyans, and controlling the movement of refugees into 'national' space through graft.

MATERIALIZING DIFFERENCE

The production and maintenance of social boundaries in Kakuma through these various forms of policing of space has profoundly material effects that transform daily life. At the time of my visit to Kakuma, in June 2010, the formal and informal rules governing space described in the last section had become normalized. But far from making up two distinct and exclusionary spaces, there was a striking level of daily interaction. The camp, then, is not an insulated space of exception: each day a tide of foot and bicycle traffic flowed into the camp beginning in the early morning hours, receding again as night fell. Rather than a series of reciprocal exclusions that serve only to separate absolutely nationals and refugees, the material basis of these exclusions draws the two communities into interaction, producing spaces of connection and exchange. The boundary maintenance practices discussed in the previous section reflect not only legal and political categories, but also are productive of particular material relations of exchange. These exchanges take many forms, including daily petty marketing, barter and gift giving, and bring refugees and hosts populations together through both personal and impersonal relations of trade.

Part of what is at work in the efforts to spatialize the difference in these categories is an attempt to balance the material entitlements of refugees and hosts. Refugees can claim international assistance through their rations card, but are largely prohibited from engaging in direct self-provisioning through subsistence. On the other hand, Turkana are barred from receiving humanitarian handouts, but have retained broad control over local environmental resources that sustain them and camp residents as well. The normalization of the camp-town distinction and the constant policing by all involved simultaneously gives rise to deepening ties across difference in the

mode of exchange. As a result of these mutual exclusions and differentiated entitlements, a thriving economy that trades food assistance for environmental resources has taken root in Kakuma.

For the resident refugees, the spatialization of the camp prohibits most productive activity. This is felt most acutely for those who, like the Didinga, have previously been largely subsistence producers, where land and other environmental resources are key ‘means of production.’ Instead of applying their labor to nature to produce their own subsistence, they are made to depend on handouts to meet their basic needs. The divorce of food from productive labor transforms people from subsistence producers to merely consumers. Food in this context becomes only an object of consumption, almost completely abstracted from the labor that produces it. Indeed, it is precisely this abstraction that Marx uses, in *Capital*, Volume 1, to characterize the commodity form (Marx, 1990). With food aid the abstraction is even more rarified precisely because it is provided freely as a ‘gift,’ in this case across great distance. I turn now to explore the process of commoditization in the camp.

Food Aid and the Commodity form

Classically, the emergence of commodity relations has often focused on the productive side of the equation, where production is no longer focused solely on the maintenance and reproduction of life, but also on the realm of exchange (Marx, 1990: 166). In particular, scholars have examined deepening commoditization in the context of a turn away from subsistence through increasing penetration of market relations (Watts, 1983). Markets, money and commodities are seen to go hand in hand, and commodity relations have often emerged in response to the imposition of new taxes (collected in currency rather than in kind), *corvée* labor demands and or the imposed cultivation of cash crops (Katz, 2004).

In the context of the camp, the shift between subsistence and commodities occurs instead through practices of consumption, which are engendered by the entitlements afforded to refugees

and the camp's spatialization of difference discussed above. With the prohibition of many forms of productive practices inside the camp, the material practices of subsistence production are eroded. At the same time the provision of free 'laborless' food assistance as a categorical entitlement, allows for the emergence of exchange as a means of securing the consumptive needs of the refugee category. While food assistance is vital to refugee survival, it is never sufficient to provide for all of their needs, a circumstance that prompts refugees to trade rations for other goods. This, I would argue, is not due to the over-provision of assistance (rations are too generous), but inheres in the transformation of people's relation to food brought about by its separation from productive practice. The externalization of the provision of food means that no accommodation is made for individual tastes and preferences, as would be possible when engaging in subsistence production. On top of that, logistical (and budgetary) considerations on the part of humanitarian agencies, limit the provision of perishables, such as dairy, vegetables and meat. Given this state of affairs, exchanges are generally a result of the under-provision of even the most baseline means of subsistence, including animal protein and fuel wood.

Commoditization in the context of formerly subsistent camp residents, then, can be understood as a shift in both practices and orientation, where the means necessary to maintain ordinary life are no longer acquired through production but rather consumption. The limited possibilities for subsistence production and the provision of insufficient assistance combine in such a way as to leave unsatisfied critical consumptive needs. Refugees enter into exchange relations, then in order to meet particular consumption deficits, using the food they receive as commodities. The distinction I wish to draw out here is that production is initially absent in this configuration. However as the habit of commodity consumption has become more entrenched, there has been a subsequent deepening of commoditization in the realm of production. What this means is that in order to meet burgeoning consumptive needs, refugees take up the 'production for others' so

classically associated with the commodity form. Faced with the chronic under-provision of critical needs, many Didinga refugees adopt a variety of licit and illicit petty production practices with the express purpose of exchanging goods produced for money. This deepening cycle of commoditization is illustrated in Figure 2.

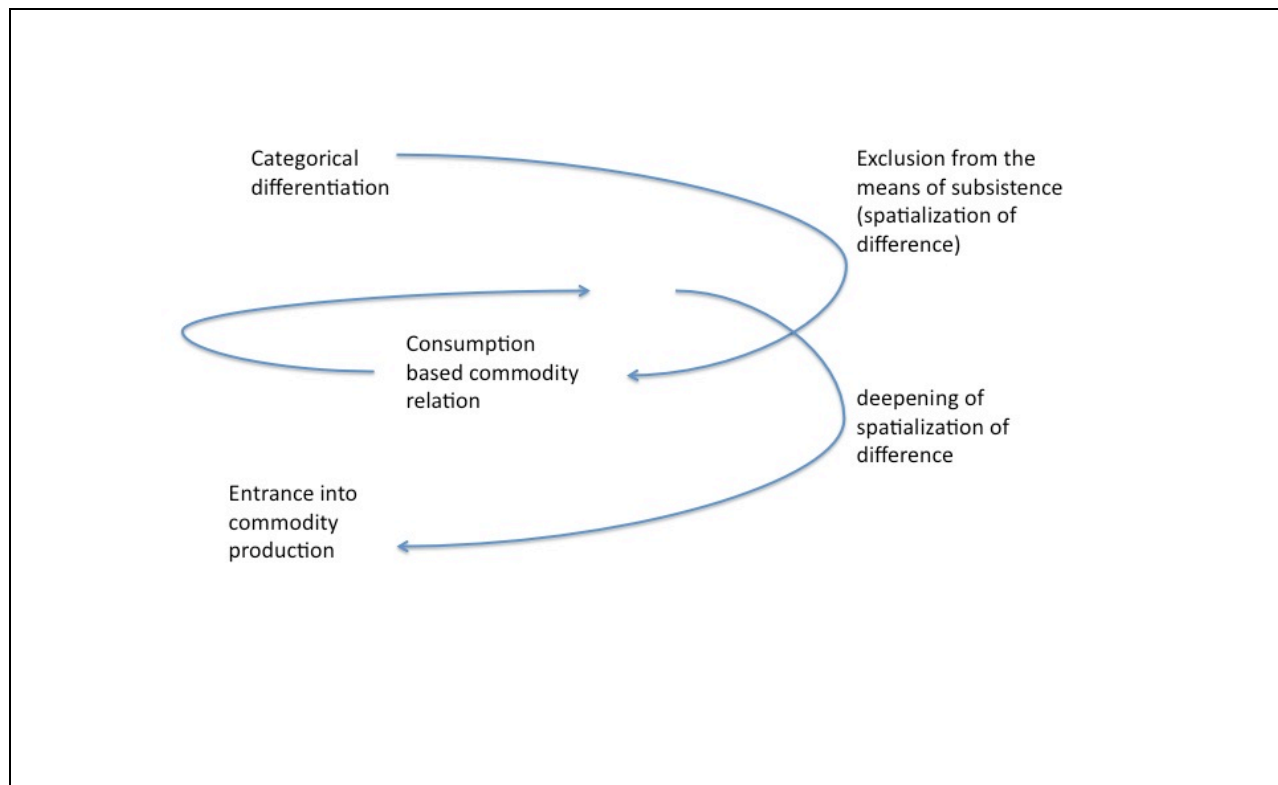


Figure 2: Consumption based commoditization cycle

As I will show in the next chapter, the chronic under-provision of fuel-wood is a case in point. Lack of fuel is a persistent problem for refugees in the camp, despite monthly distributions of firewood. Refugees have developed strategies to cope with this lack, in particular the sharing of hearths and coals among neighbors to minimize fuel waste. This is by no means sufficient to make up the deficit, however, and there remains a large demand for charcoal within the camp. The need for fuel is one of the most pervasive drivers for exchange across the spatial and legal categories that separate refugees from the local population. It prompts refugees to barter food aid directly, or to use money to buy charcoal from Turkana vendors who maintain a monopoly on its production through

the exclusionary practices discussed previously. What results is a vibrant trade relation. Daily hundreds if not thousands of kilo's of charcoal are brought into the camp, mostly by Turkana women, who set up stalls outside distribution centers or engage in itinerant hawking inside the residential groups. All along the major roads of the district sit large bags of charcoal, suggesting that commoditization was not limited to the camp-economy—refugee demand for fuel-wood acted as a catalyst for the widespread commoditization of food aid, refugee labor and environmental resources across categorical lines of distinction.

Commoditization in Practice

But, to say that commoditization is underway actually tells us very little about what such a process looks like, the status accorded to particular ways of interacting with commodities, and how various actors might seek to police or control their use. The provision of food aid is at the center of the process of commoditization in Kakuma and its surroundings. Yet at the moment of its dedication as such, food aid enters into a context whose end goal is not profit (through exchange in the market), but rather the provision of free food to those in need for direct consumption.

How does this movement from care to commodity to gift change the ways in which food aid functions? In the introductory essay to the volume 'the social life of things' Arjun Appadurai (1986) brings anthropological attention to understanding what, or rather *when* and *how* commodities operate. Bridging Marx and Mauss, his analysis collapses the binary mode of thinking that so often work to distinguish gifts and commodities as modes of exchange, where gifts are associated with the social embeddedness, reciprocity and spontaneity of face-to-face societies, and commodities are characterized by the de-personalization, profit-orientation and calculation of industrialized societies. He argues, however, that both gift and commodity exchange "operate according to cultural designs" (Appadurai, 1986), and must be understood within these context. When this is done, as Bourdieu

does in his discussion of the gift and counter-gift in Kabyle social life, the calculative aspect of gift giving reappears (Appadurai, 1986; Bourdieu, 1977).

The ways in which a particular thing may move across these categories, at one moment an item of consumption, at another symbol of social status, and at still another a commodity shows that "commoditization lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 15). If the commodity is not so much a thing, but a 'thing in a certain situation' (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13) then it becomes possible to apprehend the social political and cultural factors that define certain things as commodities, while others remain outside this relation. In the chapter that follows (Chapter 3), I explore how commoditization works in practice in the refugee camp. These practices, I have argued, are deeply shaped by the spatialization of difference that maps particular categories of people to particular entitlements. I consider the daily practices of Didinga refugees with particular attention to their habits of consumption, exchange and production, and how deviations and diversions from this spatial and material order are policed by camp authorities and refugees themselves.

CONCLUSION

The refugee camp is a particular socio-spatial technology that is organized around coding and spatializing difference—between refugees, local residents, Kenyan authorities, and humanitarian workers. As with all socially produced spaces, the camps have profound material effects. In the case of the camp, particular spaces and entitlements were joined together through power-laden processes of social categorization. The production of camp space—through administrative regulations, active policing and violent enforcement—was at the same time a process through which difference, material entitlements and space were articulated. In contrast to much contemporary theorizations which see “camps” as a space of exception (*see for example*: Darling, 2009; Franke, 2009; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Mountz, 2010; 2011; Ramadan, 2009) Kakuma refugee camp served to draw together

populations across categorical differences. The particular spatiality of the camp has contributed to the emergence of an active economy of exchange between hosts, refugees, and authorities, which has resulted in deepening of commodity relations in both the refugee population with whom I worked and the Turkana host population. While commoditization had long been associated with 'encampment' and many scholars have written about camp economies (Brees, 2008; Callamard, 1994; De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000; Jacobsen, 2005; Koenig & Dube, 2005; Porter et al., 2008; Werker, 2007; Wilson, 1992), my work draws attention to the critical role of space in understanding these processes and formations.

CHAPTER 3

PRACTICE: KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

COMMODITIZATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE



Dancing at dancing ground in 57, Kakuma. Photo: Léonie Newhouse

A TYPICAL DAY IN KAKUMA

In the grey light of the early morning, the people of Group 57 begin to stir. Nancy (19) emerges from her house. At the threshold, she stoops to grab each of the 8 ten-liter jerry cans that she stores just inside the doorway lining them up in the makeshift shaded area that is her kitchen. Awake now that the open door leaks in the bright early light, I follow her out into the *halang* (compound yard). She pours some water into a cup, which she uses to quickly wash her face, and her mouth. She calls to Chichi the young daughter of one of her neighbors sending her to bring the empty containers to the standpipe. Nancy, an amputee, often asks neighboring children for this minor assistance since it means one less trip to the tap. Chichi doesn't mind however. She quickly gathers the containers together, pulling a string through their handles and skips away. Nancy

crosses the compound to ask her neighbor Naccule for an ember. Taking it, she returns to her stove and starts a fire to heat water for chai.

At this hour, the water at the standpipe a few hundred meters from her halang has just started flowing. Several young women and girls stand around it, filling 20 and 10-liter containers for the day's use, getting thoroughly wet in the process. Chichi approaches, placing Nancy's containers next to the cement pad crowded with those of other households. Nadai is at the front of the spigot, filling one 20 liter container at a time. As the first one fills, she pushes it out of the way grabs a second. She turns it over to rinse it off before placing it under the tap. With one hand she holds open the tap, and with the other she reaches for the next jerry can. Once she finishes, Chichi waits for her to move the heavy filled containers, and maneuvers the smaller containers into the gap. Another woman at the spigot helps her, moving the heavy containers for her once they have been filled. Having finished her task, she leaves the filled containers for Nancy to collect since, at five years old, she isn't yet strong enough to carry them home.

One of the spigots is stuck in the on position; a concrete gutter delivers the excess water to a small (2 meters in diameter) cement-lined reservoir. Lōkadakōng, a boy of about 12 dips a black plastic watering can into the muddy pond, pulls it out and weaves his way through the community garden as quickly as he can, the heavy burden of water hastening his steps. At his mothers plot, he tips over the can and the water spreads out to fill the small levees that mark the boundary between each plot.

His mother, Napii is busy hauling water too. She is one of the most active gardeners here, with plots dedicated to *weka* (okra), *diati ci mordoo* (bean greens) and *diati ci lothatinit* (pumpkin greens). There are several other women busily tending to their gardens, ensuring that the soil is well soaked so the plants can withstand the long hot day ahead in the desert environment of Kakuma. On her way back home, Napii checks in on her neighbor's children, calling for them to bathe and get ready for school. Their mother, a cook for the girls' secondary school on the other side of the camp left for work the evening before and won't be back for a few more hours.

At home Lōkadakōng's older sister, Nakang (14) is taking down the turquoise mosquito nets tied up in front of their house where they all slept last night. She looks into the pots from the night before to see if there is anything to reheat for breakfast. Not finding anything she gets some fortified porridge flour and gives a handful to her youngest brother Lotiman (3 ½) and sister Ayaa (1 ½).

Lōkadakōng returns from the garden, fills a basin and quickly washes his legs, face and hair with soap, along with Eunice's nephew, Lokuju and her twin daughters—Achen and Apio—who are couple of years younger. Once clean, they pull on their purple

checked uniforms, find their notebooks and run off to school, collecting the other neighborhood children along the way. They will get some porridge at school.

Today, like many days, Nakang is staying home from school to prepare food, do laundry and care for her siblings. Ayaa, who has been feverish for the past few days, is refusing food. To tempt her into eating, Nakang kneads together white flour, yeast and water making dough for Chapatti, a favorite food for many children here in the camp. As the dough sits rising, she heads to the neighboring halang to borrow the short wooden rolling pin, board and heavy cast iron griddle used to cook the flat bread. Deftly, Nakang works a small piece of into an even circle. She places it on the griddle, and as it cooks, takes up the next piece of dough to begin the process over again.

In the mean time, Nancy returns with the last two jerry cans. The water on the stove is boiling; she shakes a spoonful of crumbled black leaves over the pot and lets it steep. Ducking into the house she comes out with a small plastic bag of sugar, bites one of the corners filling the bottom of each cup with a good centimeter worth. After pouring in the tea and mixing it up, she calls for me to deliver it to her auntie Pepii, who is too ill to get up from her make-shift bed.

We sit drinking tea in the growing heat of the morning, though it is not yet 8 am. A neighbor stops in with a bucket full of *mandazi*, a fried, sweetish bread made from wheat flour. She is on her way to the market to sell them, but took the detour to check in on Pepii and see if we might want to buy some of the still warm bread. Since there is no food left over from dinner last night, this day we do. A few minutes later, Napii returns from the garden with a few bundles of greens and a handful of long tapering okra. She leaves three okra and one bunch of greens for lunch in a pot for Nakang, and heads off to the market with her produce.

As she is leaving, a middle aged Turkana woman arrives at the entrance to the yard. Her wrap is well worn and dusty. She is light and wiry but she walks with a straight back. Everyone knows her; she comes by each morning to beg food. She walks over, and Nancy greets her in Kiswahili, looking in the pots from the night before for any left over food. She finds some dried out 'ahat' (stiff maize porridge), and drops it into the bag that the woman holds open. With a quiet bow, she thanks Nancy and continues to Eunice's house. As she walks away, Nancy says to me "I think she is the hardest working woman in all of Turkana."

Thinking now about her own responsibilities, Nancy looks through her bag of rations, to decide what to cook for lunch. There are enough of the mottled red beans to make a meal, but she will need to go to the market to pick up some onions and spices. She pours the beans out onto a tin serving tray, and begins to sort them, pulling out any small rocks or moldy beans. I sit down with her in the shrinking shade, adding my hands

to quicken the work. The beans given as rations are covered in dust, and must be washed several times before they come clean. They are also very dry, and take much longer to cook than the fresher beans she can sometimes find in the market, meaning that preparations for lunch start as early as 9 am.

Once the beans have been put on the fire, Nancy collects the dirty dishes from the night before. Using the sandy dirt and a small amount of water she scrubs them clean, then rinses them with clean water. Before the sun is too high, she heads off to the market to pick up the onion. Eunice, heavily pregnant, asks her to pick up a small can of tomato paste for her, giving her a 20-shilling coin. Before she leaves, she surveys the supply of firewood and charcoal. Finding it barely sufficient to cook the beans, she asks Eunice to buy some charcoal for her, if anyone comes by offering to sell it.

Emerging from the gate of Group 57, we turn southward hugging the eastern fence for shade. Along this stretch of road, there is only the occasional shop. These shops sell small things, and goods in small quantities: matchboxes, individual tea bags, sugar tied up in 100g sachets, al-Tunsa instant juice mix, as well as lollies and gumballs for the children. A bike mechanic sits under a makeshift shade structure. A bicycle pump, glue, and bits of rubber inner tubes are laid out on a sack in front of him. Next to him is an older man with a bucket. It is filled with mandazi, and there are boiled eggs and a bag of salt on the lid.

As we make our way to the main market, we are constantly on the alert for the ring-ring of bicycle bells. Boda bodas—the ubiquitous bicycle taxis that service the camp—weave erratically across the width of the pockmarked dirt track of the road, dodging walkers while seeking out the smoothest ride for their passengers. The constant bicycle and foot traffic make it difficult for the occasional vehicle to maneuver. A white land cruiser comes up from behind, and with a honk attempts to clear out space for it to pass.

In the dust of its passing, a group of young women call out to Nancy from across the road.

Nancy! A kong-a? (Nancy where are you going?)

Oko cuha. Hadimini busala. (I'm going to the market. We need onions)

Oko na buuk. (I'm going too)

Abonaa. (Ok)

They join us for several meters, as they exchange news and gossip with Nancy, then continue on ahead. We make our way much more slowly, because of Nancy's leg. Her prosthetic leg allows her to walk without crutches. Still she lists from side to side as we go along.

About a ½ kilometer down the road, we approach Distribution Center One, where every two weeks refugees registered at the camp pick up their rations. The main food market, which lies up a side road, overflows into the open area in front of the center, making it one of busiest corners in the camp. In it you can find Turkana women selling charcoal, Turkana men selling roasted and stewed meat, young refugee women selling mandazi and young men selling 'ice cream'. Mangos, oranges and avocados are spread out on tarps, people bending down to pick over the piles of three that have been arranged by the vendor. Boda boda drivers crowd around hoping to get passengers.

On distribution days, a handful of people sit in the shade of the thorn brush fencing, their rations spread out on a cloth in front of them, waiting for someone who is interested in making a purchase. Across the clearing, at the mouth of the market a collection of vendors trade in the same commodities, though it is hard to tell if they are buying or selling.

We cross the open area, and enter the food market. Nancy takes the lead. To the left, just inside the gate a few women sit behind stacks of greens and fresh okra piled in groups 3 and 5 on a rough wooden tabletop. To the right, a stand constructed of a series of lashed together poles displays small cans of tomato paste in stacks. In a darkened doorway further along, I see a pile of musty looking potatoes. As we push through, we move into middle section of the market, where produce imported from other parts of Kenya is sold. Several shops display pyramids of wrinkled tomatoes, purple onions, bags of shredded cabbage and *sukuma-wike* (collards). Behind one of these stands, a brown woman sits deftly cutting the rolled up dark green leaves. Amongst the vegetable vendors, are four or five butchers. A half-kilo of meat sells for 50 KSh with bones, but composed stacks of innards and tendons can be bought for just 10 KSh.

Beyond are the dry good shops. Sacks of provisions—beans, maize flour, green grams, lentils—line the road, in front of low tables stacked with larger bags of rice, sugar, and smaller bags of yeast, tea, green coffee beans, Ethiopian spices. Some of the larger shops sell pasta, laundry detergent, large cans of dried milk, baby's diapers. A few even have a refrigerator case for sodas and drinking yogurt.

Slowly the stalls transition into small teashops and restaurants equipped with televisions. Some people gather here to watch football, paying 10 KSh for a seat. On the right, a shop stands out because of the crowd of Turkana women standing in front of it. Along with goods like thermoses, sofrias, and teakettles, this shop sells the small beads that make up the characteristic Turkana necklaces.

Nancy moves purposely through the crowded marketplace. As she passes the vegetable stands, she looks closely at what is on offer, comparing each for quality and freshness. She greets one of the butchers, a woman, in Kiswahili and tells me that this is

the best place to buy meat. We see Napii there; she has sold her produce and is now buying the meat for her occasional job of cooking for NGO workshops. Since Nancy is making beans today, we continue without making a purchase. Arriving at one of the largest dry goods store, she picks out a head of garlic and a small can of tomato paste. We turn around and head back through the market, Nancy stopping at the place with the freshest looking onions to finally make her purchase.

As we leave the market I shell out 5 KSh each for 'ice cream'—the popsicles made from frozen al-Tunsa fruit drink sold by teenage boys out of small coolers. They begin melting before we can even get them to our mouths.

On the way back we meet Lokwar (25) and Lorot (16) who are headed to 'Somalia' to look for some trousers. The Somali market flanks the main road that cuts through this, the oldest section of Kakuma further towards the entrance to the camp, past the food market. It is filled with small shops selling tea, new and used clothes, international phone service, internet, and sundries. Video parlors list show times on chalkboards: Rush Hour 4:30, Arsenal v. Blackpool 6:30. When it rains, the road floods, leaving behind a 100-meter long puddle that takes more than a week to dry up. On the way, Lokwar drops off his cell phone at one of the charging stores in the Ethiopian section of the market for a small fee of 10 KSh per charge.

Returning to Group 57, we arrive at Nancy's halang just as Eunice begins negotiations to buy charcoal. She gestures to three Turkana women and a girl, entering from the neighbor's halang. Two carry 50 kg sacks filled to the brim with charcoal on their heads, the other's sack is just half full. The girl carries a sack that is half empty, and a basin. All these things are smudged with charcoal dust. They come over to Eunice and the girl puts the blackened basin down on the ground. The woman with the half sac takes it off her head and begins to pour charcoal into the basin. Eunice objects; when measured this way, there will be too many small pieces that don't burn well. She tells the woman to put it back in her sac. After some arguing, the Turkana woman acquiesces then places charcoal piece by piece into the basin. Nancy asks me to go into the house and bring the fortified porridge flour to her. I bring her the nearly empty bag. There is less than one large cup remaining, and she decides that there is not enough to be worth trading. Instead she digs out some change from the shopping trip and gives it to Eunice, who adds some money of her own before handing it to the Turkana woman who has been measuring out the charcoal.

As lunch is simmering over the charcoal stove, Nancy digs out a deck of tattered cards. I help her pull the wooden chairs under the shade of a canopy pieced together from old sun-bleached tarpaulins in front of her house. Using a stool as our table, we begin to play the strategic Uno-like game of pick-two, taking occasional breaks for Nancy

to check on the beans. After a couple of rounds, Naccule from across the fence joins us. Her young disabled son sleeps peacefully strapped to her back. She doesn't stay too long, needing to return to her own fire to check on lunch after about 45 minutes. Later, Lorot and Lokwar return from 'Somalia' and join in the game.

Around noon, the primary school kids arrive home. Several crowd around us, attempting to squeeze into the games. Ateta, Naccule's 10 year-old sister, is the most precocious picking up Nancy's cards and playing her hand when she leaves the game to start making ahat, a stiff porridge typically made from maize, sorghum or millet flour—the last step in the lunch preparations.

The game is interrupted for lunch. Nancy makes up a platter for Pepií and Eunice, who sit in the shade of another house, chatting. She hands it to me to deliver. Meanwhile, Lokwar and Lorot busy themselves pulling the chairs inside the dark house. Inside, the four of us gather around a platter balanced on the stool. It is topped with a hefty portion of ahat and a bowl of beans. Here, as in Chukudum, people eat together according to age (first) and gender (second). As young, not yet married adults, we form a group. Lorot fills a cup with water, and passes it around for us all to wash our hands. We begin to eat, each scooping up some ahat, kneading it with our fingers then dipping it by turns into the bowl of beans. After washing up, we stay inside, chatting, resting or sleeping away the hottest part of the day.

Outside, the school kids argue over the cards until Nancy becomes annoyed with the noise and confiscates them. Some of the boys then head out to the small open space within Group 57 (that is used alternately as a place for community meeting, dancing ground and play field) for a game of 'football' played with a ball made of a blown up plastic bag wrapped with rags. Lokuju has somehow borrowed a bicycle, and attempts to ride it around the halang, not quite stable enough to tackle the narrow pathways that run through the group. Lōkadakōng works on a small mud brick structure—a house for ducks—that he has been building for a week.

As the afternoon wears on, Namana, one of Nancy's cousins, stops by to convince Nancy to plait her hair. Working together Nancy, Ateta and the twins begin by combing out Namana's existing plaits, using a hair pick to untangle the ends. Then Nancy skillfully parts her hair and begins to weave Namana's hair into tight rows, adding in rust colored extensions purchased in the market. The process takes much of the remaining afternoon, the two chatting as it goes.

Ateta is called by her sister to go pick up some onions and yeast. Naccule hands her several coins, counting out the amount she should spend on each item, and how much should be brought back in change. Ateta yells to Achen and Apio and they run off together to the market to fetch the goods.

At around four, Lokwar and Lorot head out to the dry riverbank that marks the western boundary of the camp for a pick up football game. Before they go, Lokwar brings the empty jerry cans to the tap for Nancy. The water has just been turned on, so he takes the time to fill them. Only four needed filling, so together he and Lorot are able to carry them back to the halang in one trip. Together, Nakang, Lōkadakōng, Lokuju, and the twins head to the standpipe to fill their families' containers. Lōkadakōng stays behind to complete the evening watering. Nakang is the only one strong enough to carry a full 20-liter jerry can on her head. The others team up, carrying the weight between two of them for the short walk back to the halang. Even still, they have to stop, rest and switch carriers several times along the way. As they haul water, an eleven-year-old boy calls out 'royco royco royco royco rycooooo' skipping and jumping past them. He hopes to make a few sales; there might be some people who forgot to pick up the bullion cubes used to spice nearly every meal.

Nakang goes about the laundry for her younger siblings, though Lōkadakōng is responsible for washing his own uniform. She collects various items discarded by Ayaa and Lotiman over the course of the day in to a basin. She pours water over the dirty clothes and drops in the rose colored soap given out with the rations. Grabbing the first garment, Lotiman's overalls, and with soap in one hand she uses the other hand to rhythmically tug at the garment, working up a lather and working out the dirt at the same time, then placing it in a second basin. Once she has finished scrubbing all of the clothing, she pours water over the soapy clothes and repeats the process to rinse out the soap, and then hangs up the clothes on a wire that is strung across the halang for that purpose.

Finishing this task, she calls first to Ayaa for her to take a bath, which she does without too much protest. Lotiman is another story. Wearing only a pair of red underwear, he is covered from head to toe in dust. Too stubborn to wear clothes for very long, he doesn't like having a bath either. Nakang has to chase him down, grab him as he kicks at her and bodily thrust him into the basin. She scrubs him briskly all over, making sure to get the important parts- his dirt encrusted hair and his rear end, while he screams. With a few quick cups full of water, the suds are washed off and she carries him to a tarp laid out on the packed dirt of the halang yard, so he will stay clean while he dries off. She takes advantage of the fact that both he and Ayaa are in the same place and serves them a meal of ahat and a dark-slimy bowl of greens cooked with okra and tomato.

Napii returns from work, and joins them on the mat. She is a bit tipsy, but speaks to them with love and caring. She shares a bit of the food, singing to her youngest children a while before getting up and heading to one of the neighbor's yard to look for some more beer. By now, dusk is approaching. Nancy puts the lunch beans back on the

fire to heat. She then heads behind the house to the latrine to bathe, determined to do so in the last bit of light before the cockroaches begin to emerge. The kings of the latrine, she calls them.

A bit further away, Eunice's children gather around their dinner: ahat served with dried fish cooked in tomato paste with a bit of okra to thicken the sauce. After dinner Lokuju, the twins and Sunday quickly rinse out their uniforms and put them on the line to dry. Even with out the help of the sun, they will dry quickly in the dry desert breeze. They join Ayaa and Lotiman on the tarp, while Nakang and Lōkadakōng work together to set up the beds for the night. They lay down several blankets next to the wall of their house. Next they sort out the nets, tying them up side by side. Unless rain is threatening, sleeping outside is preferred for the cool night breezes. Once these have been set up they join the other kids that lay out on the tarp, singing school songs and telling each other stories.

Back from bathing, Nancy mixes up a new pot of ahat. She looks now and then at the gate of the halang, wondering when Lorot and Lokwar will return from their game. It was already quite dark, and surely they couldn't still be playing football, how would they see anything. When she judges that the porridge is finished, she quickly removes it from the fire and turns over the pot onto the serving platter. Any delay in this step means that the porridge sticks in the pot. She replaces the pot over the steaming ahat and brings it inside to cool.

Timing it perfectly, Lorot and Lokwar arrive laughing. They had taken a detour after the game to pick up the phone, and for that reason had arrived a bit late. On the way they had also picked up a packet of al-Tunsa juice mix for them to quench their thirst. Using my water bottle and a pitcher they pour in the powder, pouring the liquid back and forth between vessels to make sure it is well mixed. I'm given a platter to take to Pepií, which I do. I find her and Eunice sharing the dried fish dish she had prepared. They take the bowl of beans and the ahat and put on the platter they are using, leaving me to return with an empty one.

The chairs are once again arranged outside, and we wash our hands and eat beans. A few minutes after sitting down, Nakang arrives with a plate of greens for her brother, Lorot. Later a bowl of the fish stew is sent over by Eunice. We eat until we are full, and remain sitting under the starry sky.

After dinner is a time of socializing, and as we sit there we receive a series of visitors, mostly other young adults. Cell phones are multi-purposed for use as flashlights and stereos. Nyango, home on break from secondary school in Nairobi, comes by to ask if Lokwar and Lorot are busy the next day. His sister is building a house and he needs to go to the Turkana market to pick up some poles. Located just this side of 'Somalia,' the

market is really just a place where Turkana men and women gather at a wide part in the road to sell bundles of acacia and long poles for construction. Almost 2km away, he'll need help carrying all of the poles back home. Together they head off to consult with the sister and make plans for tomorrow.

In another residential group (just across the main road) a friend is distilling tonight. Nancy and I head over there, since she promised to stay up for some to keep her company. The practice is illegal in Kenya, so must be done at night in a place sheltered from view. A dilapidated abandoned house serves this purpose well, and a huge fire has been stoked inside it. The young woman and her sister tend the still, coming outside periodically to cool off and to chat with us and a few other friends gathered there. Night deepens, and we return to Nancy's to sleep.

INTRODUCTION

I open this chapter with an account of a typical day in Kakuma for Didinga camp residents in order to highlight the ways in which intersecting practices of production and social reproduction—fetching water, cooking, gardening, shopping, bartering, and brewing—articulate with the specific spatialization of entitlements and authority in the camp. In the last chapter, I argued that the camp linked categorical distinctions between people to particular material entitlements, and that this connection was spatialized through various forms of policing, including violence. The result, I argued was deepening commoditization that was driven by the need to address unmet consumption needs. Yet in the day to day experience of camp residents, the violence that underlies the socio-spatial organization of the camp receded into the background—a set of unspoken rules that govern behavior and shape practices. By focusing on the everyday, what comes into view are the preferences, habits and practices that taken together make up the camp economy.

Refugee camps are spaces designed to foster vulnerable life, and yet the scope of this objective is most often limited to supporting social reproduction at a very basic level. In what can be considered a 'humanitarian bargain,' very minimal supports for refugees are offered in exchange for a limitation on their rights to pursue most forms of productive, meaningful work. Despite this

tradeoff, the level of support offered is not, in reality, sufficient for survival. Faced with this raw deal, refugees take up a number of licit and illicit practices to supplement consumption and generate income to help fill the gaps, a process of commoditization based on unmet consumptive needs in the first instance. But beyond any particular instance of exchange, the chronic under-provision of aid and the policing of its use deeply shaped consumptive habits, ideas of value and decisions about labor. While various forms of mutual support among refugees persisted in the camp—indeed these were critical to meeting subsistence needs—commoditization, conceived of as a particular way of assessing value through things, deeply inflected everyday life and shifted the ways in which labor was understood and valued.

THEORIZING THROUGH THE EVERYDAY

In choosing to focus my research on the everyday practices of production and social reproduction, I follow a number of contemporary geographers and anthropologists who called attention to the wider importance of seemingly banal practices (Brody, 2006; Katz, 2004; Reeves, 2011; Sharp, 2011; R. J. Smith, 2011). Within the discipline of geography, the French school of Marxian social theory—in particular the works of Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1993) and Lefebvre (1991; 2000; 2005)—has been very influential in how the everyday is understood and analyzed. Each of these theorists looks to the practices, habits and dispositions that comprise everyday life, albeit in very distinct ways. While these theories have been more heavily developed in relation to mass consumer capitalist society (especially true of Lefebvre, as noted in the introduction) there are some threads that can be pulled out that are of broader use and I draw from those threads in the present case.

I begin with the conception of the ‘everyday’ that is most dissonant with the use to which I wish to put the concept. For Lefebvre (2000; 2005), everyday life is a product of the alienation of mass consumer society. He sees everydayness as symptomatic of the domination of capitalism,

which has expanded from the economic field to encompass the cultural and social world as well. Under this reading, everyday life is coeval with mass consumer society and describes the social conditions pertaining to life in that context. Lefebvre sees in the everyday an alienation that is a byproduct of the ways in which this realm is folded into capitalist consumption through measurement and calculation (Elden, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Lefebvre & Rabinovitch, 2000). Though this understanding of the everyday—the repetitive, cyclical activities that count for everything outside of capitalist production—is less relevant in a social context such as Kakuma, where capitalist production has not fully taken root, there is something to be gained by looking at his call for the transformation of the everyday as the means by which a broader transformation of capitalism can take place. In talking about ways to bring to an end the alienation encompassed in his take on everydayness, Lefebvre argues for a complete rupture of everyday life by shifting to what he calls the *art of living* (Elden, 2004, p. 118). By analogy, it follows that the beginning of alienation (as he describes in everyday life) must conversely imply a transformation of the art of living into ‘everyday life.’ Put differently, any major shift in material social relations must also necessarily be reflected in everyday practices.

There are two points that I wish to draw out of this work. First, in focusing on the alienation that is inherent in consumer society, Lefebvre alerts us to the critical relation between the everyday and commodity relations. Everydayness, in Lefebvre’s sense, is divorced from the meaning that inheres in the ‘arts’ of production of use-values. The fetishism of commodity relations introduces an order of separation between labor in itself and the products of that labor. It is this disconnect that Lefebvre, following on Marx, seems to identify as the root of the alienation of the everyday in mass consumer societies. Camp life for Didinga refugees was characterized by a similar disconnect, albeit for very different reasons. The socio-spatial limitations of the camp itself set free the practices of everyday life from the significant labor requirements customary to the forms of peasant production

common in their area of origin. What resulted was not an attempt to make meaning through consumption (as Lefebvre describes in his work) but the freeing up of time that engendered an often profound sense of alienation and an agnosticism regarding the future. In the context of the very real limitations of camp life—the alienation from the means of subsistence and the prohibitions on most forms of waged work—refugees shifted their practices of consumption, exchange and production in ways that deepened their reliance on commodities, money and the market and transformed way of valuing labor.

Second, in calling for the total transformation of the everyday as a way to transform the social and material relations in which it is situated, Lefebvre foregrounds mundane practices as a key site of political and social struggle and re-working. It is precisely this aspect of his thought that is useful in an analysis of the shifting practice of production, consumption and exchange that I take up in this and following chapters. As Katz (2004) points out, Lefebvre's work on the everyday reminds us of the "possibilities for rupture...in the routine" (Katz, 2004 p. xi) that have the potential to result in new hegemonic formations (in a Gramscian sense). Like Katz, I see this rupture as occurring at the nexus between productive practices and social reproduction. In following Katz, I look to "fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life" (Katz, 2004 p. x) to explore shifts in the mixed-up set of practices of production, consumption, social reproduction and exchange that were often not as clearly set apart from each other as Lefebvre's work on consumer societies suggests.

While Lefebvre's work on the everyday points to the importance of the often mundane stuff of life, it is Bourdieu's (1977) work on *habitus* that helps with the more difficult work of analyzing the practices, dispositions, and tastes that make up and define everyday life. In developing his theory of practice, Bourdieu seeks to open a path between overly deterministic structural analyses of social life on one hand, and those that excessively privilege individual agency on the other. To do so, he

develops the concept of *habitus*, which he defines dialectically as "...systems of durable, transposable dispositions...predisposed to function as...principles which generate and organize practices..." that are born out of (and often serve to reproduce) particular social contexts (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 53). What Bourdieu gives us is an attention to tastes, the body and practices. He sees these as being inscribed with and reflections of the broader social system that gave rise to them (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 172-177). In the relationship between everyday practices and the *habitus*, he charts a method for making sense of the practices and dispositions that make up everyday life:

...[P]ractices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to provoke them or from the past conditions which have produced the habitus...They can therefore only be accounted for by relating the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted to the social conditions in which it is implemented...

(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 56)

This passage suggests a relational methodology for the analysis of practice. As Kelly and Lusia (2006) point out, this approach makes his theorization sensitive not just to class-based distinctions, but also to those based in other axes of difference, including the spatial. This is particularly helpful when examining migration and the accompanying changes to social practices and everyday life. If *habitus* is the "internalization of social expectations and value systems and their incorporation into bodily dispositions" (Kelly & Lusia, 2006, p. 834), then this internalization is always in reference to a particular context, place or social field. It follows that the kinds of tastes, habits and dispositions that develop in relation to one context may not be productive, similarly valued or fully understood when they occur in another context.

It is precisely this relationship between places and everyday practices that I address in the paired chapters on daily life (this chapter in reference to Kakuma, and Chapter 5 in reference to Chukudum). Practices move with people, and then are reshaped, but only ever partially, in relation to a new context. I have argued (in Chapter 2) that the link between material entitlements and the spatialization of difference in Kakuma refugee camp set the conditions of possibility for the

emergence of a robust trade economy in the camp and resulted in the (re)commoditization of food aid. This commoditization was driven by unmet consumptive needs in the first instance, particularly in relation to fuel wood.

As I will show, the commoditization of just *one* good essential to everyday survival can impact a whole range of relations to other good, as well as to labor. Rather than merely discrete acts of exchange which turn use values into exchange values, commoditization is a process that re-shapes subjectivities and notions of value, as well as practices of consumption, exchange and production.

GIFTS OF AID

An unstated premise of the humanitarian bargain that defines camp life—where the freedom to engage in meaningful productive work is ceded in exchange for basic support and protection—is that the material assistance provided to refugees is meant for immediate consumption. Like the domestic sphere in the liberal capitalist economies, the spaces of humanitarian care are envisioned primarily as supporting social-reproduction. This anti-politics of aid provision carves out spaces of dependency that articulate with persistent colonial legacies which position the third world poor as in need of intervention and moral tuition (Ferguson, 1990; Li, 2007). More than discourses that shape the ways in which refugees are viewed, the assumption of direct support for social reproduction is tied to more material efforts to limit and police many forms of exchange of the commodities provided as rations. The effort to control the end use of food provided as aid is tied to the food's simultaneous character as commodity, gift and currency.

Appadurai (1986) argues that the movement of things between the categories of gift and commodity are bound up with cultural ideas of prestige, status and appropriate behavior. Things move, either as gifts or as commodities, through socially defined paths that determine exchangeability as well as value. Through the determination of paths, certain things are defined as outside of exchange, as incommensurable. Appadurai identifies two kinds of interventions at work

in determining these paths—enclaving and diversion. Enclaving, which he defines as the drive to “restrict, control and channel exchange,” usually emanates from, and is of benefit to, politically and economically powerful groups (Appadurai, 1986, p. 25). Diversion, on the other hand is the act of moving a thing protected from exchange into the commodity state. The diversion of any particular thing from its customary path is a form of transgression of the social and cultural norms that determine the boundaries of exchange and incommensurability:

"The diversion of commodities from their customary paths always carries a risky and morally ambiguous aura.... Inappropriate conversions from one sphere of exchange to another are frequently fortified by recourse to the excuse of economic crisis, whether it be famine or bankruptcy. If such excuses are not available or credible, accusations of inappropriate and venal motives are likely to set in.

(Appadurai, 1986, p. 27)

As this suggests movements of things between categories of gift and commodity are morally fraught, embedded in social meaning and relations of power and authority. The appropriateness of any given path is determined by culturally constructed stories and ideologies about the flow of things, whether as commodities, gifts, status symbols or care. It is clear that these movements are political.

Bringing this way of thinking about ‘things’ to bear on commoditization in the refugee camp is quite fruitful. It prompts us to ask: what are the ‘paths’ that food aid follows, and how are these paths culturally determined, and by whom. In the camp, rations easily slip through the categories of gifts and commodity in a variety of ways, despite camp authorities’ efforts to limit these inappropriate conversions. In what follows, I explore the ways in which various forms of exchange taken up by Didinga refugees in Kakuma reflect a process of commoditization driven by their unmet consumption needs, and explore what such a commoditization means for how labor is valued and apportioned.

HABITS OF CONSUMPTION & EXCHANGE

Bartering

In Kakuma, bartering and similar forms of informal exchanges played a central role in the camp economy. Because of the way that difference, space and entitlements came to be linked in the camp, refugees were unable to collect fuel wood in the area surrounding the camp. Necessary to fuel the fires to cook daily meals, charcoal was the most common good that was bartered for among the refugees with whom I worked. In the past, this good above all others had been subject to violent struggles between refugees and the local population, resulting in the spatial exclusions described in the preceding chapter. Given this context, the need for, and acquisition of, charcoal was one of the key drivers of commoditization more generally among Didinga refugees in the camp. Within the camp economy, charcoal certainly would be recognized as a commodity. Yet as only one thing among many required for daily life, the key question is how the commoditization of one sort of *good*—in this case charcoal—impacts a whole range of relations to other goods—those with which charcoal is exchanged. For this reason, it is important to critically examine the broader set of material arrangements in which this commoditization has emerged. Barter is always a mutual exchange of one order of things for another. This, then, calls for an examination of the dynamics of the other side of the charcoal barter equation—that of refugees’ entitlements to food through the ration system.

As I discussed in the last chapter, food in the camp has (with some notable exceptions) been divorced from practices of production.²³ This means that access to food resources is largely outside of the realm of domestic control and authority. Apart from the absolute right to claim rations, the quantity and quality of what is given is always an unknown. The content of the bi-weekly ration

²³ While the divorce of food from production was not total, the majority of calories consumed in the camp do come from rations. World Food Program reports estimate the daily food basket to contain 2166 kCal per person (Kovac, 2011). Some refugees asserted that the amount of food distributed has declined significantly over the years.

varies considerably from week to week. Each time refugees go to collect their due, they face differing proportion of the food-goods commonly distributed—sometimes more wheat flour, sometimes more maize meal; one week several cups of fortified porridge, the next week none; for protein there are beans, green grams (mung beans), and cowpeas but the proportion of each changes with each distribution; every few months perhaps a specialty item is given out, some dates, potatoes, or a cabbage. The uncertainty surrounding the contents of the bi-weekly food basket is important because it is one of many constraints that refugees negotiated in their everyday lives, and enters into the calculations around bartering for charcoal.

Individual preferences, and cultural food-ways also play a role. For many reasons, certain foods were more generally valued among the Didinga than others, and there were certain foods that were universally despised (though people ate them any way). As may be expected, traditional foods retained much of their popularity. The preparation of *abat* was still the most common accompaniment to meals. While maize flour was much more common in the camp than the other grains, and the maize varietal differed from what they produced in their gardens at home, the end product was largely similar in taste and preparation. But, preferences did not only follow ingrained dietary habits brought with them from Sudan; Didinga refugees also selectively accommodated some foods more readily than others. Wheat flour, and the breads made from them, gained wide appeal especially with children. In contrast, cowpeas—known in Didinga as *abubana*—did not; complaints about them ranged from their unappetizing yellow color, their bland taste, their propensity to burn while cooking, and their tendency to upset stomachs and cause gas.

When entering into a bartering negotiation, all of these factors were taken into consideration. Added to this calculus, was the knowledge of the preferences of those on the other side of the exchange, and speculation about what might be included in the next distribution. Additionally, a particular food distribution may not provide enough of a certain item to be valuable as a commodity

to be used in bartering, requiring people to save across distributions in order to use that particular good in a barter exchange. So while *abubana* were universally disparaged by Didinga, many of the Turkana charcoal sellers actively sought them out. Trading *abubana* for charcoal, then, was an unequivocally good choice. Making a similar trade for the fortified porridge flour was often less desirable. Porridge flour was certainly highly valued by Turkana, but was also good to have around for the children to snack on, since it could be eaten as-is with no preparation, and contained milk protein, sugar and other vitamins. Though this particular trade was considered less than optimal, such trades regularly take place.

Given the constraints discussed above, it was common for the refugees with whom I worked to modify their consumption of certain ration-goods in anticipation of future barter exchanges.²⁴ This shifting of consumption away from exchangeable goods is indicative of broader changes that occur as exchange comes to predominate as a mode through which to acquire the basic needs for social reproduction. Here the commoditization of charcoal had the effect of changing the way that people valued their food, in turn affecting decisions around consumption. As the discussion suggests, attitudes towards the materials distributed as rations were caught up in a complex assessment of their value, both in relation to their domestic use, but also to what other sets of use values for which they might be exchanged.

Turning again to the passage that opened this chapter, bartering opportunities present themselves as commonplace, expected daily events. The arrival of Turkana charcoal traders in the Groups was both an expected and anticipated near daily event. In the passage above, Nancy asks her neighbor, Eunice to purchase charcoal for her, just as she is heading to the market. Not knowing if and when charcoal vendors might arrive she gives her neighbor a small sum of money, in case they were to pass by while she is away. Like others residents I spoke with, she preferred to get charcoal

²⁴ Taken to the extreme, I was told that some sold off all of their rations directly after distribution, and used the money gained that way to buy prepared foods. I discuss this in the next subsection.

from the itinerant traders who passed through her *halang* on a regular basis, rather than purchase charcoal at the market. The reasons behind this are several. First, purchases close to home were logistically easier; she would neither have to provide a container for the purchased charcoal nor carry it back home. Charcoal isn't particularly heavy, but it is messy, and some preferred to avoid the inevitability of becoming covered in fine black charcoal dust that stained skin and clothing.

Additionally, making exchanges near the home opened up greater possibilities for barter. Because barter exchanges are typically conducted in the *halang*, those hoping to barter food for charcoal do not have to carry those food items to the market. It also allows for more flexibility in the barter process, since at home refugees have access to a range of possible goods that they can bring into the bargaining process, should preferences of the bartering partner differ from expectations. Refugees considered bartering in the market less desirable because the charcoal offered there was pre-sorted into standardized price/volume units. This made it more difficult to bargain effectively and to weed out charcoal of lesser quality. Unlike direct purchase with money, equivalencies between goods are not as rigidly defined requiring a certain level of back and forth in negotiations, which are perhaps more common in barter relations and take time to be resolved. Camp officials frowned on direct exchange of food for goods, even if they generally tolerated this practice because they recognized that having food without the means to cook it did refugees little good. Still, as with ration sale (discussed below) such exchanges if conducted too publicly could become subject to policing actions by authorities. This risk provided additional incentive to conduct barter exchanges in more private areas of the camp. As a relatively private space, the *halang* protects these kinds of exchanges from view by the authorities and allows them to unfold without hurry.

In the camp, some of the most critical commodities change hands through barter and other forms of informal exchange. These barter exchanges are a product of the ways in which entitlements have been mapped to particular categories of people. The monopoly of refugees on rations, and

Turkana on environmental resources draws the two communities into robust and active trade—deepening commoditization of food, fuel wood and labor is one result of such trade. Though direct barter of one kind of ‘use value’ for that of another is often seen as distinct from commodity relations, there are certain commonalities, as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has noted:

...he [Marx] was right to see...that there was a commonality of spirit between barter and capitalist commodity exchange, a commonality...to the object-centered, relatively impersonal, asocial nature of each. Barter may thus be regarded as a special form of commodity exchange...

(Appadurai, 1986, p. 10)

Like Appadurai, I see barter as a special form of commodity exchange. Within the refugee camp, it is (in part) through barter exchanges that ration-goods came to be valued not merely for their nutritional value, but also as means to acquire other needed goods. As Appadurai discusses in his well known essay *Commodities and the politics of value* “[c]ommodities represent complex social forms and distribution of knowledge” (Appadurai, 1986, p. 41). With respect to barter, knowledge of the complex interaction between domestic needs and preferences and the preferences of trading partners is a critical aspect of how people come to relate to things—food rations, soap, garden produce and so forth. Thinking about such ‘things’ in this complex calculative mode, then, shares the ‘for others’ orientation that characterizes the commodity (Appadurai, 1986; Marx, 1990, p. 166). It reshapes these ‘things’ as potential commodities, which has the effect of changing habits around consumption and use, even when these items aren’t, in the end, exchanged. This way of thinking about commoditization focuses not on the things in themselves, or on the act of the exchange, but instead on the relationship between people and things. Such a relational analysis of people and things may bring certain kinds of goods and certain forms of exchange to the center as drivers of wider commoditization. As I have shown, the under-provision of fuel wood to refugees living in Kakuma meant that charcoal played just this kind of catalyst role in setting off deepening commoditization.

Ration Re-sale

While barter remained a preferred form of exchange for Didinga refugees, it was not always possible to make direct exchanges of one use value for another. Refugees also required cash to make critical purchases. One of the ways that refugees could generate that money was to sell their rations. Yet this was also a risky business. Much more than the bartering exchanges just described, the sale of rations was policed, by camp authorities and also through a set of social norms of the refugees themselves.

It is no secret that wherever food is given as aid, secondary re-sale markets emerge (De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000; Grajales, 2011; Hansch, 1992; Jacobsen, 2005; Reed & Habicht, 1998; Stewart, 1998; Werker, 2007). This is why most humanitarian aid is visibly marked with injunctions against the resale of such items, as with the canister of vegetable oil shown in the photo on the next page. The visible branding of aid as permanently reserved for (food) consumption *only* is one technique that seeks to limit the re-commodiization of food. Despite a widely held recognition on the part of humanitarian workers on the impossibility of actually controlling the repurposing of aid, the re-sale of rations is invested with moral judgments about desert. Discursively coded as ‘negative coping strategies’ by more generous analysts, and ‘gaming the system’ by those more critical of refugees and other types of aid recipients, these practices call into question the moral character of recipients as deserving of aid, as well as the ethical valence of aid giving itself (Keen, 1992). Regardless of the way these practices are viewed by camp authorities, refugees regularly choose to sell their rations.

In Kakuma, a thriving ration re-sale market operates directly in front of one of the main food distribution centers. On fortnightly distribution days, refugees sit in the shade of thorn brush fencing, their rations spread out on cloths in front of them, waiting for someone who is interested in making a purchase. Their customers may include other ration-card holding refugees, unregistered



“Not to be sold or exchanged”
Photo: Jeff Masse

camp residents, and members of the local host community. One of the busiest corners of the camp, the common practice of ration re-sale does not go unnoticed by the various agencies and authorities that work within the camp. Yet most of the time little is done to control the trade in food aid. As this would suggest, the re-commodification of food aid by recipients is tolerated, if not condoned.

Tropes about the proper behavior of those receiving aid are productive particular forms of policing that aims at controlling the movement of food aid back into the market. As an illicit practice, ration re-sale could periodically become the subject of active policing, particularly when these practice become too blatant and visible. Policing tended to be concentrated on particular moments of visibility. For example, a few days prior to the visit of bureaucrats from the head office, I overheard the camp manager (a lower-level civil servant) order the police to clear out the market in

front the distribution centers while waiting outside her office to ask permission to use their internet connection. By the time I returned to the camp, no more than an hour later, the market had disappeared leaving only a few host-population vendors in the broad dusty open area in front of the distribution center. The market clearance was affected through a combination of rumor and active police intervention. Yet as I continued past the main market, I noticed that rations were still being offered for sale, only now the refugees sat along smaller footpaths rather than in the highly visible area in front of the distribution center. In this case, rather than arresting vendors or confiscating goods, policing efforts were aimed at moving the practice of ration re-sale from the visibility, thus preserve the appearance of the grateful recipient for high status visitors.

While the periodic policing of ration-resale curbed the practice and removed it from public view, at least temporarily, the sale of rations was also ‘policed’ socially, by means of a set of judgments about what constituted responsible conduct among Didinga refugees themselves. While the sale of a small portion of rations to make a critical purchase was seen as justified, the selling of an entire ration allotment was viewed as morally suspect, though the degree of disapproval for these actions varied according the gender of the seller. The sale of rations by an unmarried young man, for example, was grudgingly accepted behavior for single men, it was seen as destructively irresponsible when done by single women (it was unheard of for a woman with children to do such a thing). In young men, this behavior was excused, since cooking was coded as women’s work, and they were not expected to cook for themselves.²⁵ Still the preference for dealing with this situation was that the young man give up his food allotment to a female relative, who would combine it with her own allotment and take on the responsibility for cooking. Selling rations was seen as sometimes the only choice for single men who did not have a close female relative in the camp. In contrast, young

²⁵ Despite the coding of food preparation as ‘women’s work’ most young men who grew up in the camp were taught how to cook for themselves and as teenagers were tasked with cooking for younger siblings and family members, especially if they were eldest or had no sisters old enough to take responsibility for food preparation.

unmarried childless women who engaged in ration selling were seen as socially irresponsible. Money earned through such sales was rarely enough for the seller to buy prepared food for the entire two-week period until the next distribution. And often money generated from these sales was used to buy other items—such as clothing, or cellphone air-time—or to finance trips home. Taken together, the resulting lack of purchasing power meant it was common for ration sellers to run out of food money before the next distribution, leaving them to beg food from relatives. While many Didinga refugees have forged relationships with neighbors and relatives to smooth out the inevitable incidences of acute ration shortage, those that consistently relied on neighbor to take up the slack for a decision to sell rations were not well respected.

Policing by camp authorities as well as social sanction kept ration selling at a minimum among Didinga refugees living in the camp. When these refugees did choose to sell their rations, it was usually either done at a small scale with the amounts sold making up a small portion of the overall food basket, or used to fund emergency purchases (such as for medical treatment) or travel home. If ration selling was not common among Didinga refugees in Kakuma for these reasons, refugees did take up various other practices to earn money to purchase basic necessities not included in the bi-weekly ration allotments. I will discuss these practices later in the chapter. However the sale of rations points to refugees' desires to acquire money in order to make needed purchases. These acts of "selling in order to buy" as (Marx, 1990, p. 252) so famously described it, lay the ground for the extension of the commodity form into production and the ways in which refugees considered their own labor. However, I turn now to the second half of the simple selling in order to buy equation, by focusing in on the constellation of daily purchasing habits of Didinga refugees living in the camp.

Going to the Market

For Didinga refugees living in Kakuma, a day did not go by without some engagement with the market and the cash economy. Purchases usually were not large, but going to the market for vegetables or meat, to charge a phone or sending a child off to get some last minute ingredient were routine aspects of daily life. These mundane chores were often undertaken with others, becoming major social events of the day. The market place itself offers additional opportunities for socialization, as often as not, shoppers meet with friends and acquaintances living in other residential groups. Marketing provides an occasion to exchange news and gossip about events and people living in the camp, back home and in the diaspora, perhaps at a favored butcher shop while waiting for meat.

While the routine activities of shopping may appear banal from the perspective of readers in consumer-based industrial economies, these practices are based on particular skill sets and knowledges. To be certain, it is not necessarily difficult to navigate through the purchase of onions, but bad results do happen, as when a child returns from the market with half spoiled produce, or a visiting researcher comes back having paid twice the going price for cooking oil. This set of knowledge and skills is distinct from those that are at work in subsistence production. Instead of the relative merits of particular cultivars of sorghum—time to maturity, drought tolerance, yield and flavor—camp residents evaluate the relative quality and price of goods and the merits of buying in bulk or little by little, or from one particular vendor or another.

Looking back to Nancy's trip to the market proves illustrative. In going about this day's shopping, her habits, practices and knowledge aid her in making best use of the limited money that she has to spend. On her first trip through the market, she carefully catalogues the quality and freshness of the produce available, holding off on buying anything until she has had the chance to evaluate all of options. Likewise, as I came to understand over countless trips to the market with her,

she has developed the local knowledge to identify which of the dry-goods stores have the freshest beans, or carry rarer specialty items, which brands of pasta become gummy when cooked, where you might be able to save 5 KSh on commonly purchased goods, and where such a saving wasn't worth the reduction in quality. In her mind, she carried an inventory of standard prices, which she was able to call upon when sending her neighbor's children out to pick up some forgotten item. She has developed personal relationships with a key supplier—the butcher—a relationship she maintains through her customer loyalty, as well as through short conversations (and referrals) even when she is not intending to make a purchase. Though it is hard to say for sure, by tending to these relationships she may have been able to reap some benefit—choicer cuts of meats, or overweight $\frac{1}{2}$ kilos.

In her purchasing habits, if not necessarily the specific goods she purchases, Nancy is not atypical. Most Didinga refugees, regardless of gender, exhibited similar kinds of price knowledge, and discerning shopping habits. This knowledge was distributed throughout the community, as the use of children to run errands is widespread. This practice required adults to keep track of prices and preferred shops in order to properly instruct young children regarding purchases. Complicated purchases involving more than a few items were routinely assigned to older children (especially girls). But it was also not uncommon for children as young as six to be given exact change and sent out for small quantities of matches, tea or sugar, which could be acquired in the roadside stalls closer to home. When errand runners returned, their shopping skills were evaluated by adults, and those that were not discerning in their shopping—whether by inattention or design—were avoided when the next errand needed to be run.

The pervasiveness of this distributed knowledge about the market, vendors and goods reflects the importance of cash purchases to sustaining everyday life in the camp. The market—both as a physical place, and as the social relations of exchange that occur there—has become embedded in daily practices of the refugees with whom I worked. Indeed, an otherwise often monotonous day-

to-day life was punctuated by these trips, which provided entertainment, sociality and occasionally excitement to long stretches of undifferentiated time.

As this suggests, the market both in the abstract, and in terms of the physical space of shops and stores has taken up a central place in the everyday lives of Didinga camp residents. If commodities embody, as Appadurai argues, “complex social forms and distributions of knowledge” (Appadurai, 1986 41) it seems clear that this form of distributed knowledge about commodities, prices and attractive exchanges knowledge has become ‘common sense’ for refugees living in Kakuma. Increasing commoditization is one of the *necessary* byproducts of the spatialization of the camp. The spatialization of difference that emerged in Kakuma was rooted in, and produced profound material effects. While entitlements to rations supports refugee survival in the camp, the under-provision of key subsistence needs (in particular animal protein, fresh vegetables, and fuel wood) prompts refugees to enter into various forms of exchange relations—bartering, ration sales, and cash purchases—to ensure survival. These diverse practices of exchange—which span direct exchange of use values, selling in order to buy, and buying for immediate consumption are the key initiating stage in ongoing commoditization. Commoditization encompasses not only shifts in mental disposition toward material goods, but also, towards ones own labor. The process of commoditization in the camp was also generative of broader shifts in the ways in which Didinga refugees labored, and viewed their own labor—producing in order to sell—as well as the development of complex barter and market exchange circuits—buying in order to sell, or (even more lucrative) buying in order to barter in order to sell—that transform money into capital. It is to these practices I turn now.

PRODUCING COMMODITIES, PRODUCING CHANGE

Throughout this chapter and the last I have repeatedly pointed to the limits placed on productive practices of camp residents by the spatial organization of camp life. While these limits

were considerable, I don't want to suggest that all possibilities to generate income through production were foreclosed. This section looks at some of the productive practices that do happen—focusing particularly on those that relate to food, eating and drinking. Those engaging in camp based productive practices do so for a number of articulated reasons. First, as previously mentioned, the rations received by refugees rarely provide enough calories or enough variety for a healthy diet. Unmet consumption needs push refugees to engage in productive activities to supplement their food intake (both directly through vegetable cultivation, and indirectly in the production of goods to sell). Second the freeing up of time resulting from the restrictions on grain cultivation and pastoralism and by the provision of rations, leaves refugees in the camp without much to do besides caring for children and cooking. Without meaningful ways to spend their time, some refugees take up petty production in part to combat the persistent monotony of the hot dry days.

An array of money-earning activities is available to people in the camp. These include setting up small shops or restaurants, working with camp based agencies on an incentive basis, driving a *boda-boda*, tailoring or sewing school-uniforms, gardening, beer brewing and distilling, and working as a physical laborer or porter. While many Somali and Ethiopian refugees run thriving shops and restaurants, no Didinga refugees have been successful in doing the same. In part due to lack of capital, Didinga refugees also lack the practical experience of running businesses, as well as connections that would allow them to purchase goods at wholesale prices. Somalis and Ethiopians are at a distinct advantage in this regard as they draw on long histories of trading that include established networks to coordinate across distance and some arrived in the camp with significant assets. The Somali traders have the additional advantage of having access to goods smuggled through Somalia, which are not taxed and can be sold at reduced prices (Okuk, 2008). Incentive work with NGOs is sought after by many of the more educated Didinga, but this work is extremely

scarce, and turnover slow despite being poorly paid (*for the classification of this kind of work as voluntary, see Agier, 2002*) Given these constraints, the income generating activities most common among of Didinga refugees are tailoring, *boda-boda* (bicycle taxi) operating, market gardening and brewing and distilling alcohol.

In this section I focus on the productive practices of refugee women. I do so for several reasons, both practical and theoretical. First, following from my interest in the transitions between subsistence and commodity relations, I am particularly interested in the commoditization of food. In the Didinga gendered division of labor, women are primarily responsible for food staple production (grain) as well as for meal preparation, both for home consumption and for sale. Second, as a woman conducting research, it was easier for me to engage in participant observation of women's every day lives. It was also seen as 'proper' by many Didinga that my analysis should focus on women, and these assumptions shaped the progression of my research in important ways. This was as true in the camp as it was in Chukudum, and in the interest of making an effective comparison, my focus became more 'gendered' as the research progressed. Additionally, it must be noted that women make up a significant majority of Didinga camp residents, and so their income generating practices warrant this attention.

For Didinga living in Kakuma, money-earning activities were coded by gender, with activities related to food and cooking largely restricted to women, and those requiring literacy or bodily strength largely restricted to men. A few activities were more neutral—e.g. tailoring, and increasingly incentive work with assistance agencies—with a more even gender balance. Within the gendered division of labor in the camp, among Didinga at least, arguably women were better situated in this constellation, since gardening, food preparation and the distillation of alcohol were more accessible, required smaller initial investments, and provided reliable earnings.

Still, choices made by women between income earning activities must be situated in the broader context of policing in the camp, where each of these practices is differently coded by camp authorities and Kenyan police. I explore how petty production practices are viewed by camp authorities; in doing so I tease out the contradictory ways in which recipients of humanitarian aid are encouraged to act. While refugees are encouraged to be entrepreneurial in some ways, those same entrepreneurial tendencies are seen as suspect and destructive when applied to other kinds of activities. I take two common practices—growing vegetables in small plots, and the brewing and distilling of alcohol—to show that refugee’s productive practices are differently valued by camp authorities. This points to a much a broader argument about humanitarian assistance and the politics of ‘need.’ Productive practices of refugees illuminate the some of the fault-lines around humanitarian support in a neoliberal era.

SUPPLEMENTING RATIONS: GREENS AND GARDENS

Within the camp, refugees are encouraged to maintain small vegetable gardens, as a way to supplement their limited diet and ensure that children are properly nourished. This encouragement takes the form of the provision of garden inputs—seeds and watering cans—and the development and maintenance of critical infrastructure—water provision, reservoir tanks—by agencies working in Kakuma. In an effort to diversify refugee diets, the World Food Program along with other agencies began to distribute seeds and encourage wastewater recycling for container gardening.²⁶ It is not clear the extent to which small-scale vegetable gardening was already common practice before the introduction of this program, but according to WFP figures, by 2008, about 2300 families²⁷ had

²⁶ The World Food Program (WFP) has taken a lead role in coordinating the gardening program and is responsible for the direct agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers) while the infrastructural services are provided by the UNCHR, and the German Development Agency (GTZ) conducts trainings. Though WFP continues to provide full rations (2100kCal per person per day) they have more recently recognized the need for more diversity in the refugees’ diet, especially with regard to key micro-nutrients that are difficult to provide out side of dietary supplements (WFP, 2009).

²⁷ This number is split across Kakuma, and the Dadaab complex which the same report estimates had a combined population of over 420,000 recognized residents (WFP, 2009). From my observations, it seems likely that a significant number of refugees gardening for domestic use are not captured in this statistic.

taken up gardening “to supplement their diet with vegetables and sell surplus produce” (WFP, 2009). These gardens were seen as supplemental in two senses; they provided needed supplemental nutrients and they were a source of income that could be used for supplemental purchases—e.g. animal protein, fuel wood, fresh fruits and vegetables that were not grown in the camp, clothing, entertainment, or cell phones. Notably, the selling of surplus produce is identified in the report as an important aspect of the program. Entrepreneurialism in this sphere of activity was naturalized by camp agencies and coded as beneficial. Interested gardeners were supported through inputs, training and infrastructure, and sales of surplus produce were expected if not necessarily encouraged. However, if the statistics above can be trusted, overall, gardening was still a fairly marginal practice within the camp.

In the Didinga residential groups, gardening was taken up with gusto. Garden patches were concentrated around existing water points, to minimize the labor requirement of carrying water for irrigation.²⁸ Next to many of the water points in the camp, small cement reservoirs have been constructed to capture the inevitable run off from the taps as people fill their containers. These pools serve two main purposes: they channel excess water away from the taps limiting the propensity for the area around them to become fetid muddy pools, and they provide reserve water for non-potable uses such as mud-brick making (for construction) and irrigation. Though these reservoirs have been constructed around most water points in the camp, not all of the residential groups take advantage of them for the purpose of growing vegetables. For example, some water

²⁸ This organization of space within the residential group was a deliberate and collectively made decision. As previously mentioned, in late 2010, camp authorities decided to re-establish the formal organization of space in Kakuma I, re-opening roads that had been closed off for domestic use. As part of this process, authorities became aware of these informally organized collectively managed garden spaces in at least one of the Didinga majority residential groups. Seeing that there was significant space dedicated to the gardens in a group where there was a shortage of space meant that housing was very densely built, camp authorities issued an ultimatum: carve up the garden space and allow those in need of housing to build on that land, or new residents would be assigned by the authorities to the group. Faced with the prospect of having no control over who would be settled in the group, the leadership decided to redistribute the garden land to families already living in the group for the construction of new housing (personal communication). Vegetable gardening has persisted after this change, but it has increased the labor burden on gardeners who now have to carry water significantly longer distances to plots in their own *balangs*.

points in other sections of the camp were located in the public areas of commonly used pathways, lacked surrounding gardens, and were fenced off from the private domestic spaces of residences.

In contrast, in all of the Didinga groups in Kakuma I, these small ponds were surrounded by an open area filled with a tangle of small garden plots. This was by no means inevitable, as residents reserved an area within the group for this use, prohibiting the building of housing or other private uses. Gardens in the Didinga groups were communal areas, but not public. They were located within the boundaries of the group, and so were accessible to group residents and those from nearby groups, but not the wider public of the camp. Depending on the available area between 10 to 20 households maintained small plots within each of the gardens. WFP policy is to target garden plots toward the disabled and female-headed households, however I was unable to gauge the extent to which these priorities hold in gaining access to the garden. Certainly all of the gardeners in the group where I stayed were women, and most did not have a husband living in the camp.

The plots themselves were informally arranged and tended to be small areas—no more than perhaps two square meters—surrounded by mini-earthen levees to trap irrigation waters. Each small plot was flood irrigated by hand twice daily, once in the early morning, and again in the late afternoon when the taps are turned on again.

Watering by hand requires significant labor and time commitment since carrying water is heavy work. Often children are enlisted to assist their mothers with part of this work. The practice of irrigating vegetables is much more labor intensive than the rain-fed agricultural practices common back in their home district. Early in the morning, the gardens were usually filled with activity, with irrigation, harvesting, weeding and planting often undertaken. Because of the desert climate and the camp's proximity to the equator, given sufficient water, it is possible to continuously crop through out the year. Given the limitations on prime garden space, it is not common for people to leave any areas to rest for a significant amount of time. Crops were, however, rotated to avoid exhausting the

soil. Common crops grown in the gardens include a number of vegetables typical of southern Sudanese cuisine including *weka* (okra), *kbudra* (a slimy leafy green), *diati ci mordoo* (bean greens) and *diati ci lothantinit* (pumpkin greens) that are not available in Kenya, though collards and chard which are favored in Kenya were also grown.²⁹ More water hungry crops like tomatoes and eggplant were comparatively rare, though I did note the odd climbing cherry tomato plant winding through the thorny barriers surrounding some of the plots.



Napii tending a plot of young okra
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

²⁹ The names *weka* and *kbudra* are loan-words from Juba Arabic that are used by Didinga speakers, where as *diatic ci mordoo* and *diati ci lothantinit* are Didinga words. Both *weka* and *kbudra* are used for their flavor and to thicken stews across Sudan, and are not as widely appreciated by non-Sudanese.

Garden produce is used both for domestic consumption and for income generation. Because not everyone in the camp has the interest, time, or access to a garden plot, it is easy to sell excess produce to others. Within the group, some of the garden surplus is given to close neighbors, especially if they are households with which the gardener typically shares food and firewood. Outside of the immediate neighbors and family, produce is sold to the broader southern Sudanese population, who actively seek out familiar foods that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Of course, any others who have the interest and the resources to make a purchase were not turned away. The desert heat means produce must be harvested early in the day and taken directly to market for sale. Lack of electricity and refrigeration compound this problem. The only form of extended produce storage is through sun-drying, which is in fact a fairly common practice, though only for produce intended for home consumption. Supplemental produce is usually sold in the market, at a small stand near the entrance where mainly Sudanese women sell these specialty items. Sudanese women also make up the customers of the stand, crowding around the table to make purchases. Produce typically sells out well before mid-day. Prices are not high, since most fellow refugees have a very limited income. By selling several bundles of greens or okra, a gardener can make easily enough to purchase meat, potatoes, or tomato sauce and spices to increase the variety in their diet.

For those engaged in petty vegetable cultivation, the practice impressed a specific rhythm that orders their everyday life, which has its origin in both the limitations and opportunities of camp life. Though gardeners saw producing vegetables for the market as a way to generate much needed cash income, the practice also shifted laboring practices and the ways in which personal labor was valued. Gardeners time their activities around the opening of the taps, the desert heat, and the practices of local shoppers. Compared to other entrepreneurial activities, women's petty vegetable production was championed by camp authorities. Various programs encouraging vegetable production supported gardeners' income generation activities. The infrastructure of the camp,

though basic, assisted as well. The proximity of gardens to water points (at least in the initial phase of my research) and of the group to one of the major food markets in the camp made it an particularly attractive way for Didinga camp residents expend labor and to earn money.

Differing considerably from dry land grain cultivation common in South Sudan, irrigated vegetable gardening in the camp prompted both new subjectivities and novel ways of laboring on the land. Planning for surplus, timing production and considering market prices all informed decisions about how, when and who should labor. Through its connection with income generation, laboring in the garden came to be seen as a form of work, and gardening a form of business—suggesting that refugee gardeners began to think of their own labor as a commodity. Yet gardens also supported family consumption by introducing both variety and fresh food into diet based on grains and pulses. Distributing surplus produce was also a way to express care for neighbors and relatives that served to cement relations of mutual support. Despite the ways in which it contributed to the commoditization of both food and labor, women’s vegetable gardening in Kakuma straddled both capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production and exchange.

BREWING TROUBLE: BEER MAKING AND DISTILLATION

In contrast with petty vegetable production, camp authorities took a very different view of alcohol production. They characterized these kinds of practices not as entrepreneurial ways of supplementing income, but as ‘negative coping strategies.’ This despite the fact that the production of homemade beer, grain wine, and spirits is widespread across Africa (Holtzman, 2001; McAllister, 2003; McCall, 1996). Among the agro-pastoral people of Southern Sudan, Kenya and Uganda, beer brewing and distilling is a common practice. In Kenya, however, the domestic production of alcohol is prohibited. This prohibition arises out of concerns over alcohol consumption and abuse, as well as a genuine issue of the safety of the drink. In most areas of Kenya, the production of illicitly distilled spirits known as *chang’aa* in Kiswahili is controlled by criminal gangs that often use harmful

chemicals (including methanol, formaldehyde and jet fuel) to increase the strength of their brew. Not surprisingly, the drink is regularly associated with cases of poisoning resulting in blindness and death. At the time of my research, domestic alcohol production was hotly debated in Kenyan national media as new regulations of alcohol had been passed by parliament and were awaiting approval from the president. In addition to the increased media coverage of the public health and social impact of alcoholism,³⁰ a spate of deaths further drew this issue to national attention (Leposo, 2010). While many in the Kenyan debate did not dispute the dangers of home alcohol production they also asserted their cultural rights to brew and distill.

Despite, or perhaps because of this prohibition, beer brewing and the distillation of cane alcohol has been taken up by many Didinga (as well as those from other parts of South Sudan) women living in the camp. As a practice, beer brewing is one of the critical skills women are expected to learn in Didinga culture. It is often joked that in-laws will judge the character of a potential daughter-in-law by the quality of her beer. Nearly the consistency of a thin porridge, the traditional grain beer known as *merti ci yori* (white beer or ‘white stuff’) is provided at any celebration and most public events. Alcohol production, then, is a part of most women’s repertoire, and a skill that is valued and passed down to younger women and girls.

As Hutchinson (1996) has noted in her research, displaced southern Sudanese women have commonly fallen back on beer brewing and selling to make a modest living even when faced with much more extreme forms of punishment than that common in Kenya. The pervasiveness of the practice of selling homemade beer by South Sudanese women across varying contexts suggests that beer production is particularly responsive to pressures toward commoditization. What is it about beer brewing so amenable to commoditization? In the political context of Southern Sudan, the right

³⁰ A search of the archives of Daily Nation, Kenya’s premier daily newspaper, turned up fifteen articles relating to the debate over alcohol legalization between 05/01/10 and 07/31/10, roughly the time period when I first conducted research in Kakuma (Daily Nation).

to produce and consume alcohol has been hotly politicized, especially since the second civil war. The imposition of Islamic Law on the South sparked the renewal of conflict in 1982/3. The right to produce and consume alcohol was used as a rallying cry of the SPLA rebels, and beer drinking came to be seen as an act of resistance to the North and an authentic expression of *januubi* (southerner) identity.

Cultural as well as political factors also play an important role. Beer drinking is certainly a culturally ingrained habit among the Didinga, and among southerners more generally. While mildly alcoholic, the beverage is also considered a food, and the manner in which it is made does suggest it indeed has significant nutritional value. Among the Didinga *merti ci yori* is consumed by people of all ages, and it is not uncommon for parents to give the beverage to their children. Even without considering these cultural and political factors, alcohol consumption is also used as an expression of sociality. It is enjoyable, not to mention its addictive qualities. Additionally, in the Kenyan context, legal controls over the production of alcohol price industrial produced brew out of reach of most camp residents. All of these factors combine to ensure that beer and alcohol producers won't lack for customers and can be guaranteed a modest but regular profit.

Policing the Illicit

Unlike the explicit support for market gardening, and the tacit acceptance of ration-selling by camp authorities, police raids targeting brewers were both more common and more punitive. Brewers risk physical violence, heavy fines, the loss or theft of their product and even potential jail time. Police often preferred to conduct these raids in the early morning, to preserve the element of surprise, as fewer people would be out and about to raise a warning alarm.

During my time in the camp, I witnessed one such dawn raid. That morning, the police had begun rounding up distillers in a neighboring group, and the news traveled swiftly through the group. It was perhaps a week before Nancy, my host in the camp, hoped to leave for her trip home

to see her family. To raise the needed taxi fare, she had been regularly brewing for the past two months. The raid occurred just one day after her most recent round of distilling, leaving her in possession of nearly 20 liters of *sivo*, enough to cause her problems with the police. The sound of a commotion in the distance had awoken her, and she hastily stuffed the full bottles under a table and behind her rations in the darkest corner of her home hoping that police wouldn't look too closely. Her neighbor was not so lucky, she had been caught with several jerry-cans of alcohol, which the police had poured out on the ground before arresting her and loading her on the back of a police truck.

Whereas the re-selling of food assistance was considered by the camp authorities and other humanitarian organization working in the camp to be inevitable if unfortunate, and vegetable production for sale lauded as entrepreneurial, alcohol production by refugee women was seen to be more problematic. A refugee produced blog published the following in a post about alcohol production in the camp:

... chang'aa (home distilled alcohol) also contributes to poverty because those who are afflicted do not take responsibility for their families. They spend the little money they get on chang'aa and accept suffering at home, while wasting their time in chang'aa places and forgetting their occupation.

(Kakuma News Reflector, 2009)

While this comment is addressed to the consumers of alcohol, it was my experience that there is often little distinction made between the alcohol producers and alcohol abusers. The use of food rations to produce alcohol instead of for direct consumption as food was branded by various organizations working in the camp as irresponsible behavior on the part of refugees and efforts were made to curtail this practice.

For instance, several policy and public health reports were commissioned to examine the negative social consequences of petty alcohol production and to suggest policies to address these. Discursively, these reports make implicit links between alcohol production and moral worthiness.

Several of these reports are striking in this regard. In one the practices of brewing and distilling alcohol are linked to transactional sex, the spread of sexually transmitted infections and rape (Adelekan, 2006). Another report consistently refers to those who brew and sell alcohol in the camp as “woman brewer/sex worker” (Ezard, Oppenheimer, & Burton, 2011). While there are certainly instances where brewing is associated with prostitution, I found no indication that the brewers and distillers with whom I spoke were engaging in any form of transactional sex. And, though social imaginaries that associate alcohol production with transactional sex doubtlessly influenced some camp residents decisions not to brew, active policing had a far greater role in shaping the everyday practices of alcohol production and sale in the camp. This meant that particular vigilance had to be maintained by brewers at all times to ensure that they would not be targeted by police action.

Distilling Practices

Distilling practices are governed by the need to keep sico production out of view from camp authorities. Sico distillation takes place in the privacy of the *balang*, in the area that is most sheltered from the eyes of casual visitors to the residential group. Though the distillation itself usually occurs at night, preparations begin well ahead of time. The drum and still must be borrowed or hired from a neighbor, the ingredients purchased, and extra water for fermentation and the distillation process must be fetched and stored. The location of the still is carefully chosen to hide it from public view. The drums for holding the fermenting water and sugar mash/wort and the still itself are typically set up in the remains of old houses or between existing structures. Sugar, water and yeast are mixed together in a large drum to form the fermentation base and left to ferment for some hours. Fermentation is timed such that the distillation can be conducted at night, after the entrance gate to the group has been closed leaving the walking paths inside the group restricted to residents. The steel drum is set up on blocks, and once in position, a fire is built underneath it. The still mechanism is then assembled; a long curved tube is attached which is run through a container of cool water for

condensation, and into the 5 liter containers typically used to store the alcohol. The still is tended periodically to ensure that the fire is properly stoked, that the water for the condensation bath is cool enough and that the container used to capture the alcohol isn't full.

Given the amount of work that is involved in the process, women distilling usually call on the assistance of neighbors, daughters and other female relatives. Generally this labor is not compensated with money, but those that help out can count on receiving similar help when they distill as well as some free product. Once the first drops of alcohol begin to flow, the brewer opens for business. Neighbors and friends may stop by for a nip, though because it is usually late in the evening, customers are limited to residents of the group. *Sico* makers reserve the first 5 liter jerry can of the distillation, which is sold at a premium because it is considered the strongest and purest. With a full still, each distillation produces approximately 15 liters of *sico*, which is collected in 5L and 3L containers. *Sico* is sold by the $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ liter, measured in empty 500mL glass Coca-cola bottles.

Hosting Practices

Beer and *Sico* parlors cannot be thought of as permanent and fixed locations. Instead they are created through the temporary conversion of domestic spaces into open-air bars of a sort. They arise through the act of brewing and distilling and become defunct when supplies run out. Beer and *Sico* parlors are often nothing more than the provision of a shaded place for people to sit and drink within the semi private space of the *balang*. At the bare minimum, hosts provide stools, benches or mats that can be moved periodically to take advantage of the shade. A few regular brewers more actively shape their domestic space to accommodate its role as a place for alcohol consumption, providing at least a couple of distinct sitting areas for male and female customers, while at the same time preserving some areas of the *balang* and the house itself for more private uses.

Given their temporary and illicit nature of the beer parlor, the knowledge of who is actively selling what kind of beverage where must be both distributed and controlled. Often the information is spread word of mouth, by neighbors and through conversations with acquaintances. But when a broader customer base is sought, camp residents have developed a system of signs to advertize covertly when they have home-brewed alcohol for sale. Brewer will place an empty plastic bottle (for *sico*) or an empty grain sac (for beer) on the end of very long pole and prop it up like a flag pole so that it can be seen at a distance. Those looking to get a drink, then need only to locate the origin of the pole and they have found the parlor.

From the time that beer or alcohol is first ready for consumption, announced to all but the closest neighbors by the raising of the pole, until it has completely run out, the host is usually kept busy and close to home. When it is common knowledge that a woman has recently brewed or distilled, people will come by at nearly any hour of the day. As a result, brewers know that they will be working long hours with few breaks during that period. Often, they avoid leaving their home group, asking friends and neighbors to pick up the items that they may need from the market in order not to miss an opportunity to sell some of their product. For each kind of brew, customers and busy times vary. In the case of beer, the heaviest time may come in midday. Women stop in for a short break to have a drink and gossip on the way to or from the market. Customer turnover is more rapid and most often consists of neighbors and residents of the group where the beer parlor is located. The beer is served in large plastic mugs and pitchers.

For *sico* sellers, the busiest time is late afternoon up until they close the doors to the groups. Those that have incentive-jobs with the NGO's may stop by after work for a while to drink and relax. When selling *sico*, it is more common for customers to include people from outside the group, including South Sudanese from other regions, northern Ugandans that live in the Equatoria groups

and Turkana men, though customer make-up largely depends on the social network of the *sico*-seller and the proximity of the *balang* to well used paths and short cuts.

As with other practices, the social, legal and material constraints of the camp induced shifts in brewing habits, with the production of highly distilled *sico* coming to dominate as the product of choice among domestic alcohol producers. In the camp, *sico* distillation took the place of *mokoyo*, a less alcoholic distilled liquor (similar in strength and taste to the Japanese rice wine *sake*), which is the most commonly produced spirit back in Chukudum. The two distilled alcohols differ not just in strength, but also in the type of still used and the base of fermentation. The base of fermentation is grain in the case of *mokoyo*, and refined sugar in the case of *sico*. According to Amana, a young woman attending the residential girls secondary school on the other side of the camp, the preference for *sico* distillation over *mokoyo* and beer production has to do with the availability of ingredients. Didinga camp residents use all of their grain rations for food, so there is never much left for fermentation. Buying grain in the market is more costly than buying sugar, and the fermentation process for *mokoyo* and *merti ci yori* takes much longer than that for *sico*, since both involve a series of fermenting and drying steps that take 1-2 weeks to complete. In comparison, the fermentation and distillation of *sico* can be completed in a couple of days. Additionally customers prefer its higher alcohol content. Beer production, on the other hand carries the benefit that most of the fermentation process can occur indoors, it is more amenable to small-scale production, and less strictly policed.

But another explanation for the preference for *sico* production is worth considering. Beer in many ways already functioned as a commodity among the Didinga. Historically, cultural practices around collective labor involve the provision of beer and food as compensation to a work party. Work parties could be called by anyone looking for assistance in activities that were arduous, complex or labor intensive. To initiate a collective work party, a family need only brew the beer and

send out the word to neighbors and relatives. Those that were interested would show up, and the work party would begin. As I discuss in Chapter 5, in Chukudum and the surrounding villages, this might mean the weeding a field, or the re-thatching of a roof. In the camp, similar modes of mobilizing collective labor persist. Work parties are held to make bricks, raise walls and roofs, mud-plaster houses and dig latrines. Critically, back in Chukudum before the war, these labor exchange relations carried an assumption that the beer and food are prepared at home.³¹ This semi-commoditization may have made it conceptually easier to move from production of beer for domestic use and labor exchange, to the production of beer explicitly for sale. But the cultural history of beer production means that it was not solely made for sale on the market. Beer retained its quality as only partially commoditized; its role as a mediator of social relations and means of celebration persisted even in the camp.³²

Sico on the other hand, was previously not commonly distilled and people do not view it in precisely the same way. And while *sico* was often provided in the camp as compensation for work party participants, there wasn't the expectation that the host had made it themselves. In contrast to beer, *sico* is always made to be sold—a commodity in the most classic sense. *Sico* distillers viewed producing and selling alcohol primarily a way to support their children, siblings or other family members, and were acutely aware of the trade offs between the cost production and the labor involved in both production and sale of home-brewed alcohol. Lucy my host for part of the time in the camp explained it this way:

Lucy : I make sico so I can get something small, to help my brother. You can see—he needs a new uniform for school.... I'm not even sure if I will make any profit this time. The cost of firewood goes up and up, and sugar too. And it

³¹ Domestic production of beer for labor exchange should be seen more as an ideal type than as a social rule. This practice was described to me by Didinga living in Kakuma and Chukudum. Interestingly the practice of buying beer (as opposed to making it oneself) for labor exchange was becoming more common in Chukudum, a topic I will take up in the later chapters. Still in the way that this practice was presented to me there was moral weight put on the self-production of the beer.

³² The unique semi-commoditized nature of beer and alcohol is discussed further in Chapter 5.

is very difficult, I wear myself out. There is no resting. When you have sico, you must always be ready to sell at any time of day or night.

Leonie: Do you drink it yourself?

Lucy: No, no. It is not good. This is just for business.

(Fieldnotes, Kakuma, 6/24/2011)

As this conversation shows, making sico was seen as arduous and demanding *work*—a form of labor that meant being constantly available to potential customers. That sico-parlors were often within, or directly adjacent to private domestic spaces, meant that for the duration of the run, distillers ceded their everyday life to the work of making and selling alcohol. The margins in this business were slim and could very easily be erased by shifts in the price of key inputs. Given this state of affairs, when the price of sugar rose by half during one of my return visits, many of the sico distillers I knew considered giving up the practice until a new selling price for sico stabilized. Because some producers were still selling alcohol at the previous prices, they faced the difficult decision of whether to close up shop or to sell their product at or below cost. Most chose to lay off production for the time being, based on their recognition that their labor would not be sufficiently compensated.

Among Didinga refugees in Kakuma, sico distillation was undertaken exclusively to generate income, and as such the considerations that shape its production differs significantly from the kind of petty vegetable production described above. If vegetable production demonstrates the “porous border between commodity and subsistence production,” (Katz, 2004, p. 54) sico production exemplifies commodity production in a stricter sense and demonstrates the ways in which commodity production shifts how people make decisions about their own labor. It contrasts with vegetable gardening or selling prepared foods³³ in that surplus product could not be directed into household consumption if for some reason a producer was unable to make sales. Refugees could expend labor in pursuit of these other productive practices with the knowledge that they would not

³³ Selling prepared foods such as mandazi—a Kenyan style fried bread eaten in the morning—was another common income generating practice.

'lose' the value of their labor. When prices dipped, the products of their labor could be directed to support subsistence as use values. If, in contrast, prices rose more products could be sold as commodities at the market. Sico production had none of this flexibility, since domestic consumption of large quantities of alcohol does little to support family wellbeing. Given this constraint, sico production prompted Didinga refugee women to think of their labor in new ways—they made calculations as to the tradeoffs between the investment of labor, time and money and expected profit. Many refugee women came to value their own labor in terms of exchange, that is, as a commodity.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have analyzed the emergence of new practices, habits and subjectivities that are tied up with the particular spatiality of Kakuma refugee Camp. Kakuma refugee camp was generative of a set of material practices that reflect the particular spatial constraints and opportunities of camp life. The provision of food-aid to refugees and their exclusion from productive resources such as land, pasture and environmental resources formed the conditions of possibility for deepening commodity relations in which economic exchanges occur across lines of categorical difference. The under-provision of basic needs further contributed to an active nexus of trade between refugees and host populations. In Kakuma, *bartering* (for charcoal)—rather than market mediate sales—played a catalytic role in the process of commoditization. At the same time, opportunities to earn money in the camp were constrained by legal prohibitions against refugee work, administrative regulations aimed at policing illegitimate forms of exchange, and shaped by discourses that coded particular productive practices as either beneficial income generating strategies or 'negative coping strategies' Within these social, legal and discursive constraints, women living in the camp reconfigured sought out new ways to profit from their labor in order to earn cash to supplement rations and bolster familial consumption. In that process, refugee women came to

account for and value their own labor in a commoditized manner. Among Didinga refugees in the camp, the need to fuel cooking fires produced profound shifts not just in practices but, also in subjectivities that reflected a distinctly commoditized relationship to resources, food and labor. Refugees consistently adjusted consumptive behaviors in light of the known preferences of bartering partners, and cultivated knowledge of a whole range of other commodities that could be sold for cash or otherwise exchanged for charcoal. The need for income to supplement unmet consumption need also imposed new rhythms of work, habits of marketing and way of calculating and assessing value, including the value of ones own labor. These shifts demonstrate the profound effects of specific spatial organizations of social and material on everyday practices related to consumption, exchange and production. However, these practices in turn *also* have the potential to re-shape the spatialization of social life. This dialectical relationship between space and material practice comes to the fore in Part III of the dissertation, as my focus follows returnees from Kakuma as they return to Chukudum and begin to remake their lives.

CHAPTER 4
SPACE: CHUKUDUM
NEW SPATIALITIES IN CHUKUDUM TOWN



Chukudum skyline.
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the social regulation of space in Chukudum in the wake of significant return migration. In contrast to the circumscribed spaces of the refugee camp, Chukudum is a place of comparative openness where movement and settlement are not as heavily policed, and where many residents have access to productive resources and the means of subsistence. Yet, just as in the camp, ideas of difference operate in ways that regulate both space and material practices. As those displaced from Chukudum returned to town, notions of belonging were territorialized effecting new

closures in an effort to regain authority over the local environment and economy. In Chukudum, town residents have mobilized ideas about belonging and difference to reshape settlement patterns, economic activities and political space.

This chapter, then, examines the ways in which conflict, displacement and return migration are implicated in the making and unmaking of a frontier political economy. To understand the ways in which space, resources and labor are freed up for profit generation, I consider the role of violence in the creation and dismantling of frontier-like spaces. During the Second Civil War, rebel and military operations slowly pushed a majority of Chukudum residents to abandon the town, seeking refuge in the mountains and over international borders. The exodus evacuated socially mediated governance mechanisms that determined access to and control over resources of their power and authority, producing a space where soldiers and internally displaced people were able to capitalize on resources set free of social regulation. I focus particularly on attempts at reasserting local control over space—unmaking a conflict generated resource frontier—through social and occasionally violent acts of territorialization. I link the qualified success of this project to contingent local history that shaped both flight and return. The strategic use of migration within families has meant that returnees have been welcomed home, and have largely been able to retain access to lands, through kin, clan based relations.

FRONTIER SPACE & THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CONFLICT

In the previous two chapters, I explored the ways in which social and political categories were spatialized in the refugee camp, and how these spatializations produced both exclusions and a nexus of interactions and exchange. As I shift now to discussing how return migration has reshaped Chukudum town and created and re-created new forms of spatial governance, it is essential to first come to understand the political, economic and social landscape that characterized Chukudum at the moment of transition between flight and return. I do so through the notion of the “frontier” as this

concept is particularly useful in understanding these kinds of transitional moments. I understand Chukudum as a frontier space and an object of negotiation and struggle between variously situated political, economic and social actors—including returnees, stayees, remnant soldier-traders, and new entrepreneurial migrants. In what follows, I explore contemporary uses of the frontier concept in geographic scholarship and argue for its relevance to my broader argument about the ways in which return migration to Chukudum reshaped the social, material and political landscape there. Pushing the discussion in a new direction, I highlight the possibility of removing an area from a frontier-economy through socially embedded acts of settlement, use, and territorialization. Pushing back against the economic dominance of prospecting ‘foreign’ entrepreneurs, Didinga town residents successfully reclaimed authority at the local level to determine access to land and resources. Just as in Kakuma, the mapping of particular social categories to particular spaces materialized particular forms of difference—notably those based on ethnicity and nationality, rather than migration history.

Within the field of political ecology, the notion of the frontier has gained currency as a way to understand renegotiations of space that surround moments of migration, and political, economic and ecological transition (Barney, 2009; Curry & Koczberski, 2009a; Fold & Hirsch, 2009; Hirsch, 2009; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Tsing, 2005; Vellema, Borrás, & Lara, 2011). As I will show, an influx of soldiers, displaced people and weapons into Chukudum and the surrounding area following the 1991 split in the SPLA produced just such a moment of transition. As these new and powerful migrants acted to limit people’s mobility while claiming food, natural resources and cattle, local people were unable to protect their own culturally rooted claims upon the land (Walraet, 2008). While much has been written about the devastating effects of war economies on the prolongation of conflict, these have often been abstracted from the geographically situated contexts in which they emerge and through which they are experienced. Instead, I argue for the usefulness of thinking conflict economies through the lens of the frontier. Not only does this allow for a more

geographically sensitive discussion of the political economies of conflict, it suggests new lines of analysis as these places and economies are transformed through the end of overt hostilities.

Since the 1990's, there has been a growing scholarly emphasis on the political economies of internal conflict across the social sciences. This can be traced to the need to understand the emergence and persistence of armed civil conflicts after the end of the Cold War, given that these could no longer be read as proxy wars fueled in a large part by broader political agendas. For some, the conflicts of the 1990's presaged a 'coming anarchy,' where identitarian politics would lead to new kinds of conflicts that had the tendency to slide easily into war of all against all (Huntington, 1993; Kaplan, 1994).

Reacting against alarmist representations of these conflicts, scholars took issue with explanations of conflict that see war and civil violence as irrational, dysfunctional and based on 'ancient ethnic hatreds.' Instead, they explored the ways in which the initiation and perpetuation of violent conflict can create opportunities for economic accumulation, and as such they identified some of the economic rationalities of war (*see for example*: Berdal & Malone, 2000; Collier, 2000a; de Soysa, 2000; Duffield, 2000; Keen, 2000; Reno, 2000). While the specific analyses differ in the relative weight they place on demographic transitions (Urdal, 2007), the presence of high-value resources (Collier, 2000a; Le Billon, 2001; Sachs & Warner, 1995), trans-border networks with links to international trade (Duffield, 2000; Keen, 2000), all privilege rent-seeking behaviors as the variables with the most explanatory power in relation to the entrenched internal armed conflicts of the 1990s. Despite the importance of these efforts to understand the political economy of conflict, some analyses focus too squarely on economic drivers of conflict to the exclusion of historical, social, and political factors (*for critique see*: Arnson & Zartman, 2005; Collier, 2000b; Collier & Hoeffler, 1998). Because of the reductionism inherent in such an approaches, I find that the concept

of the frontier more productive in understanding the intersection of political, social and economic processes that transformed the regulation of space in Budi County during the second civil war.

Most commonly associated with settler colonialism of North America, the frontier has been understood as a material and ideological space productive of self-reliance, unchecked individualism, and the freeing up of new lands and resources for exploitation and development (Turner, 1920, pp. 212-4). For Fredrick Jackson Turner, this combination resulted in a democratic nationalism that reshaped the American character (Turner, 1920, pp. 30-33). But as Peluso and Lund (2011), among others, point out, the same process that produces Turner's democratic, self-reliant individual also dispossesses prior inhabitants of the land, erasing their sedimented claims to territory.

While the "frontier" carries with it its own colonial legacy, the concept has since been reworked in ways that allow for a more grounded analysis of the dynamics that unfold as places come to be dis/articulated through violence. As a conceptual tool, the notion of the frontier encompasses the both imaginative and material processes that come together to free-up land and resources as being there for the taking (Tsing, 2005) By its nature a relational concept, frontier areas and the people that inhabit them are discursively and materially linked both to each other and to external markets and global processes (Curry & Koczberski, 2009; De Angelis, 2004). While other ways of understanding conflict economies pay close attention to these external linkages, they are less able to examine the messy everyday ways in which resources are freed from landscapes and livelihoods. Nor do they take into consideration the discursive work involved in re-coding people and places as wild, unruly and dangerous. Instead of focusing at the scale of the organization and describing tactics aimed at extracting wealth to support armed struggle or soldier livelihoods—say through the funneling of mineral wealth into the arms trade or the extortion of civilian populations—an analysis of conflict economies as frontiers opens up the possibility to be attentive to the complicated and contradictory ways in which individual and group actors seek to capitalize on

the unbounding of space from existing social and cultural arrangements. Frontiers, then, are made rather than discovered. As Tsing writes:

A frontier is an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet—not yet mapped, not yet regulated. It is the zone of un-mapping: even in its planning, a frontier is imagined as unplanned. Frontiers aren't just discovered at the edge, they are projects in making geographical and temporal experience. Frontiers make wildness, entangling visions and vines in violence; their wildness is *both* material and imaginative. This wildness reaches backward and forward in time, bringing old forms of savagery to life in the contemporary landscape.

(Tsing, 2005, pp. 28-9)

Frontiers may be thought about as places on the margin—distant places populated by unruly people seeking profit above all else. Yet, however marginal, the creation of any frontiers is also a radical act of inclusion. Based on extraction, frontiers violently link places into broader circuits of accumulation and profit making through nested forms of social, political and economic deregulation.

These 'deregulation zones' operate at the muddy edge of licit and illicit modes of power (Tsing, 2005). The deregulation referred to by Tsing (2005) operates at multiple scales, and through multiple regimes of rule implicating the international, national, local and intimate rationales that produce frontiers (Moore, 2005). Importantly, development imaginaries at work in creating frontiers often carry with them discourses that reproduce binary oppositions between civilized/uncivilized and modernity/tradition, and which code inclusion in the circuits of capitalist production as, by definition, progress (Ferguson, 2006; Li, 2007; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Tsing, 2005).

Frontier-creating deregulations, at least in part, emanate from weak political authority selectively or intentionally employed. In his discussion of post-colonial African politics, Achille Mbembe calls attention to the selective deployment of political authority in Africa, drawing out the continuities between colonial rule and the 'disembowelment' of the continent under contemporary neoliberal economic policies (Mbembe, 2001, p. 73-78). He argues that neoliberal economic policies:

...have created the conditions for a *privatization of this [political] sovereignty*. But the struggle to privatize state sovereignty largely overlaps the struggle to concentrate and then privatize the means of coercion... In other words...one characteristic of the

historical sequence unfolding in Africa is *the direct link that now exists between, on the one hand, deregulation and the primacy of the market and, on the other, the rise in violence and the creation of private military, paramilitary, or jurisdictional organizations.*

(Mbembe, 2001, p. 78-9; original emphasis)

This passage points to the ways in which neoliberal policies of deregulation intersect with violent struggles in post-colonial Africa. In a similar vein, James Ferguson explores how, in contemporary Africa characterized by enclave capitalism, it has become possible, not to mention profitable, to provide political order flexibly (Ferguson, 2006, p. 208). As this language suggests the flexible provision of political order articulates with austerity programs that have rolled back the state in efforts at furthering the integration of local places into the global economy. Both Ferguson (2006) and Tsing (2005) argue that while political order and clearly defined and enforced property rights have too often been seen as the necessary conditions to attract global financial capital, it is also true that their constructed absence—one of the main characteristics of frontier space—can also be very attractive.

But deregulation also describes how spaces are set free from local social and cultural regulations of space and practice. Of course, in post-colonial Africa, systems of customary law and state power intersect. As Mamdani and others have argued, the colonial division between subjects of customary law under native authorities and citizens of the colonial state has persisted in contemporary post-colonial states (Becker, 2001; Mamdani, 1996; M. I. Mitchell, 2011; Moore, 2005). Nevertheless, the alienation of land and other resources that occur in frontier zones requires not only connections to global capital circuits and weak authority on the part of a central state, it also requires the active undermining of these other forms of local authority. As I will show, the arrival of the SPLA in Chukudum in the 1990's produced a series of events that progressively eroded local authority over resources, mobility and space more generally, and set free local resources as a basis for new forms of accumulation.

It is precisely this process of ‘setting free’ that Tsing (2005) examines, in her book *Friction*, by asking how places become frontiers with the complicity of local populations for which the undermining of local socio-natural regulations is so clearly disastrous. She argues that frontiers are not just places or processes, but “an imaginative project capable of molding both place and process” (Tsing, 2005, p. 32). This imaginative project can define remote forestlands or entire nations as emergent loci for the generation of profits (Fold & Hirsch, 2009). Frontiers, then, are produced through the articulation of developmentalist imaginaries, state action and capitalist penetration (Fold & Hirsch, 2009). Frontiers can be the unruly leading edge of civilizing projects that seek to reshape peoples’ relations to nature and to each other, completely transforming everyday life.

In what follows, I chart the emergence of a frontier space in Chukudum—one that a) freed local resources from existing socially-articulated rights that determined access and control, b) turned resources—such as thatching grass, hardwood poles, gold and cattle—into commodities, which then c) formed the basis of the accumulation strategies of outside soldier-traders. But, if the creation frontiers are projects that enlist the reorganization of social, political and economic practices across space, then so to are projects of frontier unmaking. As people returned to Chukudum in the years after the crisis, they engaged with varying success in the project of unmaking their town as a frontier. Seeking to reclaim their own claims to the town, Didinga returnees and stayees together enlisted discursive, material and sometimes violent actions in attempts to recode Chukudum as unwelcoming of pioneers’ efforts to profit from their home places.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT AND FRONTIER MAKING IN CHUKUDUM

As I have recounted the Didinga hills, little changed in the early years of the SPLA war. Several rounds of SPLM/A recruiters passed through the area, and several residents and community leaders took up the call to go for training in Ethiopia. However the theater of war remained distant from Chukudum. This changed with the fall of the Derg in 1991, and the subsequent split in the

SPLA when Garang moved his national command to Chukudum, and established a series of bases and training camps further south along the border with Uganda (Rolandsen, 2005).

With the arrival of the SPLA-Torit faction in the region, SAF began targeting Chukudum with aerial bombardment, starting in late 1991. At this time many residents of Chukudum moved up into the mountains directly adjacent to the town, with school children descending a the few kilometers to town daily for lessons, returning to the mountains at night. SPLA abuses of civilians, including animal theft, arbitrary arrests, summary executions, and village burning also pushed residents into the mountains for safety (HRW, 1994: 141-6). Many families eventually split up, with mothers and children making the journey to Lokichoggio, Kenya or to Uganda on foot, often at night to avoid aerial attacks. Many men stayed behind to cultivate, tend their herds and fight with the SPLA. This was the first phase of major displacement from Chukudum town. Aerial bombardments by the SAF continued sporadically throughout the conflict, with reported incidents in 1993 and 1998 (IRIN, 1998).

At this time, the town also received a large influx of ethnic Dinka displaced from Bor, who followed military units making their way from Ethiopia to Equatoria (Walraet, 2008). Many continued on to Lokichoggio and eventually Kakuma, but a significant number of these IDP remained in Chukudum and set up trading businesses.³⁴ Because soldiers were not paid for military service and provisions were irregular, many SPLA fighters also set up trading operations that were heavily reliant on the extortion of local producers and the expropriation of local resources. In addition, many of the Dinka IDPs were either former soldiers or had connections to people high up in the military hierarchy (Walraet, 2008). This group of soldier-traders used their connections to the military leadership and superior arms to assert new forms of control over resources in Chukudum, turning the area into a frontier for the accumulation of wealth (Johnson, 2003: 109). According to

³⁴ There are no reliable estimates of the number of Dinka Bor deciding to stay on in Chukudum.

Walraet (2008), the newcomers monopolized trade in the area, adversely affecting the livelihoods of many Didinga in the area. Extensive roadblocks to ensure the security of the various bases in the area provided opportunities for extortion and the confiscation of trade goods (Walraet, 2008). The well connected and heavily armed newcomers also took over the lucrative tobacco trade, controlled cross-border trade in cattle, and even enforced a monopoly on environmental resources such as thatching grass, bamboo and hardwood poles, used in local construction (Walraet, 2008; *in re: SPLA extortion in South Sudan more generally, see* Johnson, 2003; African Rights, 1997). Despite the tense relations with the SPLA, some of town residents returned to Chukudum after the initial rounds of heavy bombardment.

While Chukudum was strategically important during this stage of the conflict, tensions between the local community and the military continued to grow. As discussed previously, commitments made toward democratization and the establishment of civil governance structures during the National Convention held in Chukudum was not well implemented by the SPLA. Control of the military hierarchy remained firmly in the hands of Garang, and military objectives continued to trump political commitments in the organization's relations with civilians. While Garang has been lauded for his political astuteness, he has also been criticized for his autocratic tendencies and favoritism. Given that it was not uncommon for potential rivals, popular commanders, and those whose loyalty he suspected to die under mysterious circumstances, open criticism of Garang was fairly muted (Rolandsen, 2005; SPLM/A & Didinga People, 2002).

However, the promotion of Dinka from Garang's home area of Bor and Garang's refusal to allow soldiers (and officers) to defend their home areas led to some level of quiet dissatisfaction within the ranks. In the immediate area around Chukudum, the army continued to exert significant economic control. The lax discipline of the soldiers further contributed to tensions between local residents and the SPLA, especially as it related to the vulnerability of young women to forced and

voluntary marriage (Fieldnotes Chukudum; SPLM/A & Didinga People, 2002; Walraet, 2008). Issues around bride-wealth payments and ‘fines’ for premarital impregnation were particularly fraught. Given this combination, it is not surprising that overt conflict between residents and the military eventually rose to the surface.

The Chukudum Crisis

In 1999, tensions that had long been simmering erupted in Chukudum, leading to extensive fighting between the local Didinga population and the SPLA detachments stationed in the area. Given the economic control exerted by well-connected soldier-traders, a spark was all that was needed to set the area aflame. That spark came with the assassination of a Dinka commander by a Didinga Lieutenant in June 1999. Reasons attributed to this turn of events vary, but they involve decisions by SPLA military hierarchy over the fate of a popular Didinga Lieutenant, Peter Lorot. The start of what came to be known as the “Chukudum Crisis” has been attributed to Lorot’s anger about being passed over for promotion in favor of a Dinka Bor rival (Walraet, 2008). However, others, especially residents of Chukudum, believe that Lorot had been fingered for assassination, but discovered the plan before hand, and responded accordingly. What *is* certain is that Lorot attacked and killed the local Dinka commander in Chukudum. His victim, Deng Agwuang, had a reputation for abuses against civilians—not only in Chukudum, but also in several other areas where he had been posted (Interviews). After the assassination of Agwuang, Lorot fled with a group of soldiers loyal to him into the mountains. From there he launched continuing guerrilla attacks on SPLA soldiers stationed in the vicinity.

Lorot’s murder of Agwuang prompted reprisal attacks by SPLA soldiers on Chukudum residents, pushing people to flee the area.³⁵ Once again, the majority of people first fled to the

³⁵ These tensions spilled over into the camp, as news of the assassination and subsequent fighting reached both Didinga and Dinka people living in Kakuma. The ethnic undercurrents exploded as some residential areas of the camp were set aflame. Youths from both communities took up arms, and the fighting persisted until the Kenyan police were called in

mountains, with a number of these proceeding on to Kakuma by foot in the weeks and months that followed. According to humanitarian agency reports, 16,800 people fled the vicinity of Chukudum during the crisis—though this number likely also includes the many Didinga living in scattered villages in the lowlands of Kidepo Valley who were also vulnerable to reprisal attacks. Of the hundreds of people I spoke with about this time, all said they had left town during the crisis, suggesting that nearly all of Chukudum’s Didinga residents fled the violence.

For the Dinka soldiers-traders operating in Chukudum, the murder of one of their own legitimized reprisal attacks against the local population, including the confiscation of livestock and other property. All local people were suspected of siding with Lorot, were considered by the soldiers legitimate targets for harassment and expropriation, lest they provide any material support to Lorot’s militia. Additionally, the evacuation of the majority of the local population to the mountains and refugee camps across the borders further freed up resources for the taking, as this meant that they were not present to contest the military’s appropriations. This further removed Chukudum from the socially mediated governance structures that had previously determined rights of access and control—creating a frontier space wiped clean of historical claims.

Given that the crisis occurred in the middle of a civil war, it is no surprise that it was quickly enmeshed in a set of broader political agendas that exceeded its locally rooted origins. Like the Nasir faction before it, Lorot soon turned to Khartoum for assistance, which gladly offered its support in the forms of weapons and money.³⁶ The conflict persisted for three years, and led to the

to disarm and separate the two parties. Forty-eight people were reportedly killed in the fighting in the camp. This prompted some Didinga refugees to leave Kakuma and go to refugee camps in Uganda where they thought they would be safer. Many of the camps hosting South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda were later targeted by the LRA.

³⁶ Khartoum notoriously funneled money and weapons to many factions and splinter groups dissatisfied with the SPLA leadership within and outside the South, including the LRA in Uganda, which operated in areas of South Sudan and attacked camps where South Sudanese refugees were living inside Uganda.

widespread anti-personnel mining of Chukudum, its environs and the footpaths and roads leading into the mountains and further up the valley by both parties to the conflict³⁷.

The ‘Chukudum Crisis’ was finally mediated with the assistance of the Diocese of Torit and the New Sudan Council of Churches in 2002. On August 20th of that year, religious leaders convened a conference in Nakwatom, a village in neighboring Kapoeta County to address the grievances of all parties to the conflict. Delegates from all sides attended, including civil SPLM authorities, SPLA military authorities, traditional leaders of Didinga and neighboring communities, and representatives of Dinka Bor IDPs resident in the area. The conference aired grievances of those on both sides of the conflict and committed the SPLA and local population to a number of steps aimed at reconciliation, the details of which will be explored in a subsequent chapter. For the moment, I want to flag the conference as a turning point in the history of displacement in Budi County that signaled a transition between flight and return. In the wake of the peace conference, and the cessation of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A signed later that year, residents began to return to Chukudum. It is at this point that the story of return migration begins.

In recounting the recent history of conflict in Chukudum, I have drawn attention to the influx of new sets of actors—the military and aligned commercial interests—and the ways in which they attempted, quite successfully, to erase existing social regulations governing the production and extraction of wealth from the area—making a frontier. With the militarization of the area, control over mobility, resources, and force of arms evacuated opportunities for local people to benefit from their land and labor. Checkpoints and other forms of territorial control placed these contingently at the disposal of those considered outsiders by long-time area residents. While some level of material

³⁷ Wildly conflicting reports puts the number of mines laid in the vicinity of Chukudum during the crisis between 160 and 2,500 (Landmine Monitor, 2000). Exact numbers are hard to confirm independently. Demining was largely completed by 2009, though even during the time of my fieldwork at least one mine/ UXO was discovered on the southern outskirts of town.

contribution to the cause was considered legitimate on the part of local residents, soldier-trader's expropriation practices overstepped what Chukudum's residents considered legitimate. Because those that profited most came from other regions in South Sudan, struggles between soldiers and town residents over the authority to define and determine rights to resources came to be defined ethnically. While, as I will show, this authority has been reclaimed by town resident, questions relating to access to resources continue to articulate with ideas of belonging and difference. The management of difference through the reassertion of ethnically based rights to productive resources, then, has become a spatial question in Chukudum. In the second half of the chapter I will show how contemporary struggles over residential and productive land continue to be enmeshed in questions of spatial authority that originate in the frontier-making period of the 1990's.

UNMAKING FRONTIER SPACE IN CHUKUDUM

As a newly independent state with vast oil resources and a corrupt officialdom, South Sudan has been seen as a frontier by its own politicians, multinational corporations, its citizens, and those of neighboring countries. Violence, resources and great profits are at stake, and money is flowing. In the capital, Juba, new predatory property regimes unfold, with no one certain whose papers and which claims are legitimate (Martin & Mosel, 2011). Fueled by a growing population, this center of humanitarian capitalism spawns speculative land grabs—by nationals and humanitarian actors alike. In the South Sudanese equivalent of smoky backrooms—al fresco bars tucked safely behind compound walls—rumors of cowboy oil extraction operations and illicit arms deals scintillate, as newly arrived expatriates mix with local elites and shady businessmen of uncertain nationality. In the eyes of a slow tide of migrants arriving from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and further afield looking for a quick way to make a fortune, it is as if South Sudan is actually spelled with dollar signs. Because of its strong currency, its resource wealth, and its status as a center of humanitarian interventions,

South Sudan, like any frontier, has become a magnet for the working poor and the entrepreneurial and professional classes of countries throughout the region.

But, in Chukudum, located in a remote corner of the country with few resources readily available for extraction³⁸, the kinds of proliferating deregulation zones that Tsing discusses were not operative at the time of my research. This is not to say that the area was completely free of prospecting pioneers drawn to the area by the possibility of deriving licit and/or semi-licit profits. Such profits were indeed to be had, yet not at the scale and in the spectacular ways that are so common in newly opened frontiers. This leads me to ask, not how frontiers are made, but how they are *unmade*.

During the second civil war military leaders and their associates controlled the political, economic and social spaces around Chukudum (Walraet, 2008). They monopolized the interfaces of extraction—claiming food surpluses, cash crops, cattle and even the grass—justified in the name of national liberation (Fieldnotes Chukudum; and Walraet, 2008). These resources were turned into weapons, salaries and food for soldiers. However this monopolization through force of arms also left room for the private forms of extraction and the accumulation of personal wealth described by authors such as Reno (2000), Mbembe (2001) and Roitman (2005). The profit seeking practices of this influx of new and powerful actors produced the frontier in Chukudum. It is precisely the acts of making and maintaining the frontier that laid the ground for the crisis following Lorot's assassination of Deng Agwuang. But, if Chukudum constituted an outpost of the frontier as late as the early 2000s, the question I seek to answer is just how this frontier was unmade as people returned to inhabit the town.

³⁸ There are gold deposits in the eastern part of the state near Ngauro/Lauro, the ownership of which have been contested between Didinga and Toposa, which is suspected to be the reason behind an attack on the village which led to the death of 57 people in May 2007. In 2008, a joint venture between Brinkley Mining and New Kush Exploration and Mining company conducted an aeromagnetic and radiometric survey of the area which found economically significant deposits of both gold and uranium. The current status of the concession is unknown.

Three events set the stage for the return of residents to Chukudum town in the mid 2000s. These were the negotiated resolution of the Chukudum crisis in 2002, the formal cessation of hostilities between the Khartoum government and the SPLA also in 2002, and the entering into force of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. Arguably, these events created the conditions of possibility for local residents to push back against the frontier economy that had characterized the area for more than a decade. At the very least they formed the broader political background to return migration in Budi County. In part, the unmaking of the Budi Country frontier reflected a new emphasis on transparent and accountable governance that accompanied the SPLM/A's shift from rebel movement to political party and recognized government.

During the crisis following Lorot's assassination of Agwuang, Chukudum town had been all but abandoned by its historical residents. Building on their already-existing formidable dominance of local economic activity, SPLA military commanders had appropriated the valleys and neighborhoods of the town through their control over movement and space. The SPLA fighters based in Chukudum affected this control through attacks on civilians, extortionary roadblocks, and the widespread anti-personnel mining of the town. These techniques significantly limited local people's mobility as well as their ability to practice subsistence agro-pastoralism in the lowland areas near Chukudum, and pushed many to seek refuge in the mountains or across the border in Kenya and Uganda. This, in turn, further weakened the ability of local people to assert control over land and other environmental resources, perpetuating the proliferation of this frontier economy.

If there is any doubt that the regulation of space—both in terms of access and control over resources, and in terms of control over mobility—was a central aspect of the Chukudum Crisis, a close examination of the agreement reached between representatives of the Didinga of Chukudum and the SPLM/A shows that for the residents of Chukudum at least, these issues were of paramount importance in settling the conflict. The introduction to the official record of the proceedings (drawn

up after several days of discussions and negotiations) suggests that questions of civil-military relations—especially in relation to the economy—were central factors in the conflict:

There are a number of contributing factors making Budi County and its surrounding area insecure, and therefore creating obstacles to *local production and development*. As a matter of urgency, the conference focused on how to create a safe and stable environment for its citizens and visiting assistance organizations...

(SPLM/ADidinga People, 2002 emphasis my own)

The re-establishment of security was the main focus of the conference, however commitments made by the SPLM/A during the conference show that the Didinga community were very concerned with the economic effects of hosting the rebel military for so long. They demanded a re-weighting of the balance between civil and military authorities, and a recognition of their own rights vis-à-vis soldiers stationed in the area. Relevant provisions included the following commitments (among others): a) the transfer of problematic officers and body guards implicated in past abuses of the civilian population; b) a requirement that the sector commander to provide food and ammunition for recruits (and in this way limit private expropriation of food and trade goods from local populations) c) a prohibition on trading activities on the part of military personnel; d) a requirement that road blocks be staffed by trained police & revenue authorities, that any revenue collected must be issued with a formal receipt, and that they be limited to 5 pre-determined locations; e) provisions for mine clearance; and f) the transition to civil (as opposed to military) policing (SPLM/A & Didinga People, 2002). Each of these provisions aims to limit the necessity, incentive or opportunity for members of the military to appropriate local resources and wealth. These commitments made by local SPLA authorities during the course of the peace conference laid the groundwork for the unmaking of the frontier economy that had operated in the area during the conflict.

While I have highlighted here only the provisions constraining the power of the SPLA vis-à-vis local residents, it is clear that these provision are aimed not only at resolving the conflict, but also at addressing the material conditions that contributed to the violence. In particular, the explicit

prohibition on soldier trading practices, and the limitations on roadblocks suggest that extortion, expropriation, and practices that limited residents' mobility had been commonplace. The economic effects of these practices were significant enough for local residents that they felt the need for them to be explicitly recognized within the formal negotiations with the SPLM/A.

Of course, efforts to more clearly separate military and civil authority within the SPLM/A was not new—the issues at the root of the Chukudum Crisis are the same issues that had prompted the first national convention five years earlier (Rolandsen, 2005). Nor were they limited to SPLA—community relations within Budi County. But for residents of Chukudum the timing of these renewed attempts by the SPLM/A at strengthening civil authority in the liberated areas was fortuitous. The commitments made by the SPLM/A leadership gained further momentum as the SPLM/A entered into serious negotiations with the government in Khartoum to end the conflict shortly afterwards (Collins, 2008). The international attention that the SPLM/A received as a result created pressure to show that the rebel movement was credible as a potential political authority capable of civil governance (Rolandsen, 2005). No doubt the settling of internal conflicts within South Sudan, such as the one in Chukudum, was a critical component of establishing legitimacy and credibility in the ensuing negotiations with the Khartoum Government. Combined, these two processes created the conditions of possibility for the re-socialization of space in and around Chukudum and the unmaking of the extractive frontier economy that had proliferated there during the 1990s.

But the unmaking of the frontier cannot be read off from political agreements and new imperatives that emanate from the national and international scale of governance. Instead, the limited political space that these processes opened up allowed the active efforts of local people to unmake the frontier to take root. Residents accomplished this through a re-socialization of space that accompanied the return of Didinga people to Chukudum from the places to which they fled

during to conflict. This took the shape of an assertion of ethnic based rights to land and resources, which had the effect of closing off a set of spaces, resources and practices to those perceived as outsiders. These exclusions were aimed at using the control over space as a technique to check excess extraction of wealth on the part of outsiders. They took the shape of limits relating to access to *productive* resources in particular including land for cultivation and grazing (but not for housing or shops)—limits which derive from South Sudanese norms governing local authority and which were widely accepted as legitimate. More controversially, as I will show, excessive rent seeking by non-Didinga entrepreneurs was targeted through the control of mobility exercised in periodic ambushes of traders and taxi's on the road leading to town. Undertaken by unknown actors, these attacks had the effect of curtailing outsiders' travel to, and business in Chukudum. At the same these acts of violence both consolidated and undermined local authority to govern space and the economy.

In what follows, I explore how efforts to unmake the frontier in Chukudum depended on the return of displaced people to town. Collectively, these efforts at reclaiming land from soldiers and traders produced a considerable openness with respect to *returnee* access to residential land in town. I then consider whether the openness extended to productive resources, looking at the ways in which access to cultivable land are negotiated. I close with an analysis of the reciprocal closures that governed outsider's access to these kinds of productive resources.

MAKING SPACE FOR RETURN

Early Spontaneous Returns

The process of reclaiming land, resources, and rights to engage in trade in the market gained traction with the return of Didinga people to Chukudum town. Returns to Chukudum began as early as 2001, when tensions were still high between local Didinga and SPLA authorities stationed in Chukudum. However they remained extremely limited until after the settlement arrived at during the peace conference. The majority of these early returnees had moved temporarily to the mountains to

escape the worst violence of the Chukudum Crisis. Compared to those who fled to Kenya, this group of displaced people was in a better position to make assessments about the security situation in Chukudum because they had concrete knowledge about conditions owing to their proximity to the town. The move back to town was also relatively less risky for them because they retained the option of returning to the mountains if the security situation worsened.

Still, the number of people who returned to town *and remained there* during this time was quite small. Several people spoke to me of visits they made to town during that time, many to determine if return was a viable long-term option for them and their families. Because security was still quite bad, many of these decided to postpone a permanent return until conditions improved. Nakidichi, now a young mother, describes what Chukudum was like in 2002 when she decided to return from the mountains:

There weren't many people here at that time. There were few because people were afraid that maybe the war would come again. So even as we came back, some were still leaving to Kenya. And some others have decided to stay up there in the mountains. They say they are tired of migrating from place to place.

(Interview, Chukudum, 01/15/2010)

Another man spoke of the atmosphere for residents of Chukudum just after the end of the Chukudum Crisis in this way “by then, the town was mixed up between soldiers, so most people from town were not staying in their own balance, not staying in a stable place” (Interview, Chukudum, 01/11/ 2010). As both of these comments suggest, mobility was adopted by residents of Chukudum as a key strategy to keep themselves and their families safe during the height of the conflict. While some decided to take the risk to return to town immediately after the resolution of the Chukudum Crisis, many more took a wait-and-see approach before choosing to move back into town.

The numbers of people returning to Chukudum remained low until 2003, several months after the agreement was reached at the Didinga Peoples-SPLM/A peace conference, when people

had had a chance to evaluate the commitment of the local SPLA authorities to implementing the provisions set forth in the agreement. Again, most of those returning in the months after the settlement agreement had sought refuge in the mountain villages within a few hours walking distance from town rather than those that had gone to Kenya or Uganda. However, spontaneous returns, especially from the refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda, picked up significantly in 2005 after the CPA was signed. At that time Chukudum was sparsely populated and still dominated by the SPLA military. A sub-chief who returned in 2005 recounted to me his flight to the mountains and comparatively early return to Chukudum:

During the conflict, we were the first to be attacked. So we decided to go to the mountains and hide under the stones...I went to the mountain in 1986. I came back to Chukudum after [the 2005 signing of the CPA at] Naivasha. At that time there was no one here, except the ones with guns.

(Interview, Chukudum, 01/08/2010)

As this comments suggests, those returning just after the formal end of the conflict encountered a Chukudum practically abandoned by its residents, and taken over by the soldiers stationed in the town. However, the growing numbers of displaced Didinga people returning to town helped to slowly shift the ways in which resources, land and production were allocated and organized, through the reassertion of their prior claims to and authority over space.

As Lund and Sikor (2009) argue, the question of who has authority to define and legitimate property and access rights is better understood as a site of contestation and negotiation: “[w]hat is legitimate varies between and within cultures and over time, and is continuously (re-)established through conflict and negotiation” (Sikor & Lund, 2009, p. 7). In Chukudum, the arrival of the military in the area following the 1991 split in the SPLA was one of these moments when ideas of property, ownership rights, and access were reworked, and when the question of which social actors had the authority to legitimize claims shifted dramatically. The return of people displaced during the civil war reopened questions of the legitimacy and authority.

For an illustration of how this unfolded, I turn to Nadai, an elder in her 60s or 70s who I spoke with one morning in January in her *balang* as she prepared to gather firewood in the low foothills northwest of town. Nadai had left Chukudum after one of the aerial bombardments by the SAF in the mid 1990's. Having fled to Uganda during the Anyanya conflict, this time when the conflict came to the area, she chose to move to the mountains rather than to flee to Kenya or to Uganda again. She returned to Chukudum from the mountains shortly after the signing of the CPA:

So when I came down there weren't many here. Just some soldiers, so I chased the soldiers [away]. Those that are here now, they came with me from the mountain. Here you can see people have come from all over, and they just settle anywhere.

(Interview, Nadai, Chukudum, 01/14/2010)

Nadai, who was widowed and whose children were now living in Khartoum, Juba and the United States, made her return accompanied by others from the mountains. As she recounts, only some of these had fled from Chukudum to the mountains during the conflict, while others had always lived in the mountains, but had more recently decided to try out life in town. Nadai, whose family had claim over a large plot of land near the Catholic mission in a neighborhood of town called Nairobi, was able to successfully evict soldiers who had been squatting on her land. However, part of the reason that she was successful in this effort was because she was accompanied in her return by others who were interested in re/settling in the area:

Nadai: I used to live just there, behind that fence (pointing to a neighbor's *balang*). This whole area here is my plot. All the people who are staying here, they ask me for permission to build. Yes, they ask me.

Léonie: Do you ask anything from them in return, like rent?

Nadai: No, I give it to them for free. They ask, and I am to give it to them.

Léonie: Are they relatives, then?

Nadai: There are some of them that are relatives and there are others that need a place to stay.

(Interview, Nadai, Chuludum, 01/14/2010)

Nadai's authority over the land was thus tied to her willingness to accommodate those without prior land claims in town on her own plot. As an elderly woman without a husband, it is unlikely that her

efforts to reclaim her family's land from the soldiers living there would have met with success if she had attempted to do so on her own. But by bring neighbors and relatives with her when she returned from the mountains, and allotting them rights to build homes on land that had formerly been her garden, Nadai was able to assert her own authority over the land and evict soldiers that had been squatting there. While her claim to the land was based on traditional practices that governed land rights, her authority over access was also embedded a in set of social arrangements that sought to re-assert Didinga people's rights (as opposed to soldiers) to determine settlement patterns in central Chukudum.

As Nadai admits, many of the people that came to live in Chukudum after the end of the war had not previously lived in town. However, when she says that town residents "have come from all over," she means all over Didingaland. In the post-war period then, Chukudum was growing not only because the return of those who had previously lived in the town. Many Didinga who had fled either to the mountains or across an international border had decided to set up residences in town, regardless of their prior place of residence. They were joined by people who moved into town because of an uptick in cattle raiding and accompanying retaliatory violence along the western lowlands area near the Kidepo River. Most people I spoke with viewed this growth in a positive light. In contrast to many other instances of population growth due to return migration, in Chukudum there weren't any serious problems for new and returning migrants to find a place to erect a house. Lokibe, another elder whose family has long lived in Chukudum, explained:

Lokibe: People have come back and now there are many. So it is hard to own a big plot, and even more so for cultivation.

LN: Do you give land to others?

Lokibe: I do not give the land, but maybe if some one wants to build a small *tukul* (traditional thatched roofed cottage) then yes I allow it...Originally, there was no town here. Naqichot wanted the town to be up there. But since it has been in Chukudum, we are happy. We are happy when we see many people in town—we have some development, and even some organizations

are here to help. We need more people to come to town so we can get development. Even if you are white from America or black from South Africa, we need you to come. Because this one is a *town* and we need development.

(Interview, Chukudum, 01/13/2010)

Lokibe's views on the growth of Chukudum were echoed by several other respondents who saw return migration and town growth as portending development. Like Nadai, Lokibe expresses a willingness to accommodate return and new (for the most part Didinga) migrants on land over which he has authority. Many return migrants mirrored Nadai's and Lokibe's stories, recounting their own negotiations with kin and friends to allow them to erect a home on land close to the central area of town. Universally, all denied that any payment for land use would/should be demanded on the part of land rights holders. Rather, there was an expectation that, at least with respect to housing, land rights holders should make land available to any Didinga people settling in Chukudum, even those without historical ties to the area.

Rather than government policy, the attitudes around access to land within the town were governed by underlying cultural understandings about who had the legitimate authority to allow or disallow settlement, and also about the moral responsibility of land rights holders to give room in town for housing new arrivals. Indeed, the reassertion of historical rights by Didinga returnees against those of the military was effected not through a family's ability to exclude others—e.g. soldiers—but through their ability to determine *which* others should be allowed to use the land. While the specific logic governing land access were uniquely Didinga, that they should have the right to determine settlement in the county was widely recognized as legitimate. Even the ranks of soldiers and traders did not offer a significant challenge to re-emerging forms of local authority. And, as more people began to move into town, the position of local residents to determine settlement patterns was further strengthened. This remained true even when larger numbers of people began to arrive through the UNHCR's Voluntary Assisted Returns (VAR) program.

Why was this the case? Donald Moore (2005) offers the metaphor of ‘traction’ to articulate contingent ways in which rights claims become effective in particular moments over particular actors in particular places. For him, the successful assertion authority depends on

...provisional points of friction [that] shift across uneven landscapes, historical moments and the differential ability of specific subjects to establish footholds that gain ground.

(Moore, 2005, p. 281)

The re-assertion of Didinga authority over settlement in Chukudum gained traction for several contingent, but intersecting reasons. As I have noted, shifts in SPLM political priorities towards governance and away from military rule was decisive in limiting soldiers’ extracurricular economic activities. In addition, the history of fierce resistance to the exercise of arbitrary authority by the military during the Chukudum Crisis played a part in the relative willingness for soldiers to give way in land disputes with former residents. For traders, a more critical issue may have been to maintain the ability to conduct business in the area, which could be threatened if they appeared to push too hard against local authority over land rights.³⁹ But all of these were based deeply held belief—across South Sudan—in the territorialization of ethnic identity; that is, in the assumption that Chukudum, ultimately rightfully belonged to the Didinga people.

Organized Voluntary Assisted Returns

The question of the fate of the millions of South Sudanese refugees and IDPs had already become a focus of international agencies such as the UNCHR and the IOM, the fledgling Government of South Sudan (GoSS), and numerous INGOs well before the CPA went into effect in January 2005. While UNCHR’s mandate is to protect refugees, over the past two decades or so, UNHCR has turned its policy focus towards identifying and addressing problems encountered during repatriation with an eye towards making it a more attractive option for refugees. As ‘people

³⁹ I will discuss this further later in this chapter.

of concern to the UNHCR, returning refugees bring with them the 'protection' of the UN. This protection is legally based in international treaties, as well as the agency's own requirement that return be voluntary and that it be conducted in safety and dignity (UNHCR, 1996). Protection in this instance is thought of quite broadly, encompassing not only the assurance of basic human rights, but also of access to dignified living conditions. However, while the protection of returning refugees is justified with reference to international law, other more political considerations are also at work. Chief among these is the recognition that refugees will not return unless the home country can ensure that living conditions meet at least basic minimal standards:

Throughout the world UNHCR works for the day when displaced people can go home, but they must be able to make a life when they get there. If conditions are unsupportable, we have regrettably learned from past situations, refugees take flight again. When they do make the decision to go home, they must be helped in timely manner and effectively and conditions must be in place to make their return viable.

(UNHCR, 2005)

Research has found that the provision of aid exclusively to refugees, and not to host communities, internally displaced people or home communities has the potential to exacerbate social tensions. As a result UNHCR has adopted a relief provision strategy that is not narrowly focused on repatriating refugees. Additionally, a number of scholars found that socio-economic transformations of refugees' lifestyles in exile (e.g. from subsistence modes of production to wage work) often meant that refugees come to view the provision of a certain level of development (i.e. access to clinics, safe drinking water, and schools) as necessary conditions for their decision to repatriate (Allen & Morsink, 1994; Bascom, 1998; Black & Koser, 1999; Hammond, 2004; Kibreab, 1999). UNHCR has responded to these critiques, resulting in an expansion of their mandate and responsibilities into the realm of post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation, recovery and development.

South Sudan has, in some ways, become a testing ground for these new strategies. In Sudan, the chronic underdevelopment of the South was seen early on as a key obstacle to refugee returns,

particularly, the lack of basic infrastructure such as roads and boreholes, as well as key services such as education and health. Yet, there is wide recognition that the capacity of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) to provide these basic services to most of the south has been limited by low institutional capacity, lack of funds, and corruption (Interviews). In recognition of these limitations, UN agencies, USAID and their NGO partners have developed collaborative programs to work with the fledgling arms of the Southern Sudanese state in order to address these gaps and provide 'peace dividends' to war affected populations, prime among them returning refugees and internally displaced people (Bure, 2005).

In Chukudum, the potential return of tens of thousands of refugees from Kakuma and the Ugandan refugee camps prompted significant investments in infrastructure by UNCHR and their implementing partners in several critical sectors. These include water and sanitation (drilling bore holes, training health promoters), security (demining and training for civil police), health (building new primary health units and centers) and education (building primary, secondary and vocational schools). In addition UNHCR opened discussions with local authorities to determine where these amenities should be sited within the town.

UNHCR specifically targeted Budi County for infrastructure development because of the relatively large numbers of Didinga refugees that had expressed an interest in repatriation in a canvass of South Sudanese living in Kakuma. The agency expected more than 20,000 people to participate in the assisted return program, with a majority of these expected to stay on in Chukudum, regardless of their original home area (Interview, 06/07/2010, Kakuma). Given the projected numbers, UN agency was concerned that existing infrastructure would be severely strained, and that conflict over land and resources might accompany such a large influx of returnees to the area. Another concern of UNHCR was to ensure the returnees would not end up landless upon their return. Land rights have long been recognized to be essential to long-term well being for

those resettled for several reasons, chief among them because land is a productive resource and because it offers protection against economic shocks (Cernea, 1988; 1996; Cernea & McDowell, 2000).

Given the importance placed on land rights by UNHCR in their support for repatriation, in consultation with the county commissioner and the council of chiefs, a decision was made to encourage growth and settlement on the outskirts of town in areas to the southwest of the main market and to the west of the hospital. These areas were very sparsely inhabited at the time, and posed the least potential for generating conflict. The relatively rocky dry ground and poor soils to the south of town in particular also meant that residential settlement would not conflict with existing agricultural uses. To encourage settlement in these areas, UNHCR commissioned the drilling of boreholes the building of new schools, including one each of a primary, secondary and vocational school. In addition, they extracted assurances from the local government that returnees would be granted access to residential plots in these designated areas.

Yet these attempts by the UNHCR and the local authorities to funnel returnees into particular areas of town largely failed to take off. The reasons for this failure were many. In the first place, while many of Kakuma's Didinga refugees expressed an initial interest in repatriation early in the planning process, significantly fewer signed up for the program when it was rolled out in 2007-8. Interviews with residents of Kakuma in 2010 suggest that concerns over the long-term stability of the peace agreement as well as continuing insecurity due to inter-communal cattle raiding were important factors in refugees choosing to stay put. Others cited more personal reasons including the desire to finish schooling under the East African Curriculum, chronic health conditions, mixed nationality marriages (to Non-Sudanese) and personal safety concerns relating to pre-existing blood

feuds⁴⁰. Given the comparatively smaller numbers of returnees, it may be that efforts to direct their settlement were not considered as critical by local authorities.

Additionally, as the discussion of early returns shows, the particular issue that UNHCR was so concerned about—ensuring access to land for returnees to limit conflict—did not exist as a ‘problem’ for the majority of returnees. Owing to the strategic use of migration within families during the Second Civil War, many returnees were able to join siblings or parents who had remained in the area during the conflict. These family members had largely managed to retain or regain control over their lands prior to the initiation of returns through UNHCR’s VAR program. When repatriating refugees arrived in town, their relatives by and large welcomed them home. Given cultural practices that favor patrilocal, multifamily residence, a return to stay with parents, brothers, or in-laws was considered both appropriate and desirable by all involved.

Lotiman, the headmaster of one of Chukudum’s primary schools, explained that when he returned from Kakuma in 2009, he had no problem finding a place to build his home, “I got them [my family] when they were already settling. So I squeezed to put my house on the same plot” (Interview, Chukudum, 1/13/2010). Another young man returning from Uganda with UN assistance had a similar experience. He told me that he had no difficulties in finding a place to settle in Chukudum, “I have family land. When I came back, my mom was here. So I was able to go back to my family’s lands” (Interview, 1/08/2010, Chukudum). The ability to rejoin family who had returned to town earlier, or who had remained in Chukudum throughout the conflict had a much greater effect on the settlement choices of returnees than the location of the new schools and boreholes. Social ties, rather than amenities, determined where people chose to locate their houses. These

⁴⁰ In Didinga culture, when a person commits murder, the family of the deceased can exact justice by killing the perpetrator of the crime or one of his/her close male relatives, or by claiming a female relative as compensation. Those refugees whose family are involved in such a feud are reluctant to return to South Sudan, fearing that it may result in forced marriage or even death.

were shaped by cultural norms relating to clan membership, and family settlement patterns, which have long determined land distribution in the area.

However, access to land for housing was also mediated through social ties that extended beyond clan-based affinities, to friendly and neighborly relationships developed in the refugee camps and in the areas to which the internally displaced migrated. As the discussion of early returns points out, most returnees and Didinga migrants to Chukudum who did not have historical land rights in the immediate area could obtain access to land without any costs through informal channels. While these kinds of ties were not typically the first recourse of returnees, they could be called upon when people lacked or were unable to capitalize on family ties. “I just went to see where I could stay. So like I said, I am living with a friend. It is not in the same place as I lived before, it is some meters from there” (Interview, 1/11/ 2010, Chukudum)

In this case Natemo’s friend offered him hospitality, allowing him to erect a small house in the compound. Even when returnees arrived to find that other people had settled on their land, they did not necessarily view the issue as significant problem, as this comment by Abraham, a 21 year old who returned from Kakuma in 2004, shows:

Yeah, we found people there. So we have to squeeze ourselves, because when you try to chase them, they say you left during the war and now we are here. So there is no point, we have to live together.”

(Interview, 1/12/10, Chukudum)

While this young man’s comments re-assert his own claims to the land discursively, he expressed less interest in attempting to materialize his prior claim and evict the newcomers.

Abraham’s comments also hint at the social differentiation that has occurred between those that remained and those that fled during the conflict. I will talk more about the ways in which social differences impacted everyday life in the next chapter. For now, it is important to note that in practice these differences held little sway in determining access to resources, such as land. As Josephine, a young mother of three explained to me:

Those people who went outside? This is not a problem. Life here is not too affected by the returnees because they are the same as us. So if we are collecting wood and a Logir comes and kills one, we will all run. Still, we come back and sell it. Some others may go for greens—but no, we make no difference among us. For example, maybe my sister went to Kenya, I went to Uganda, maybe my mother stayed here with the brothers. So can my mother forget about me? No! So I can bring education maybe, and my sister she brings health. But can they forget me? No, we are one.

(Interview 2, 01/14/2010, Chukudum)

Many people in Chukudum expressed this sentiment, whether they had spent the war in town, in the mountains or in a camp in Kenya or Uganda. The idea that migration history should impact where you might choose or be allowed to settle, or what kinds of resources you could use to help you survive was consistently dismissed by residents of town.

However those who returned through the VAR program expressed disappointment in relation to the lack of support from UNHCR, partnering agencies and the South Sudan Relief and Reconciliation Commission (SSRRC) that they received after returning to the town. Many felt that they had just been dumped in town and left to fend for themselves when seeking out shelter. Their disappointments were based both on actual failures on the part of those agencies undertaking the returns process, and on misperceptions about the level of continuing support for returnees after the initial return event. Many had been provided a small amount of grain and a few non-food items (such as jerry-cans, pangas, hoe blades and water storage containers) at the Kapoeta way station, the one stop in their journey home. The grain allotments provided to them there were viewed as well below the promised three-month supply, leaving many expecting that additional grain distribution would be forthcoming. Additionally, Chukudum was the ‘end of the line’ in terms of transportation assistance; no further transport was provided to those who lived in the smaller villages, either in the mountains or further up the valley because of the poor state or complete lack of roads. At the same time, local authorities were unwilling, or perhaps powerless to support settlement in the ‘returnee’ area, which was more aspirational than real. It is impossible to know what might have happened if

there had been more institutionalized support for returnees after the initial journey, especially if that support was geographically targeted. However given the ways in which deep social and cultural ties shaped settlement, even such supports may not have had a significant impact in determining ultimate settlement patterns.

Another critical factor that shaped returnee decisions on where to settle within the town was the security situation. Persistent insecurity especially in the exposed southern and western edges of town due to cattle raiding worked against the creation of returnee enclaves within the town. The areas designated for returnee settlement were the same ones that were more vulnerable to attack by raiders coming from the west. But as the comment made by Josephine quoted earlier in this section makes clear, all residents of town were equally vulnerable to attack by raiders regardless of where they spent the war. Ongoing insecurity, then, shaped people's preference to stay close to the center of town, even if that meant squeezing into already densely settled areas. While many residents of Chukudum told me that historically Didinga settlement patterns favored loose collections of households spread across the landscape—as was still common in the highland mountains that were easier to defend from raids—the vulnerability to attacks in the lowland areas created a new impetus toward a more concentrated urban-like settlement pattern.

Yet security was certainly not the only reason that people chose not to rebuild their homes in the areas nominally designated for returnee settlement. The need for security, which was attempted through densification cannot be divorced from shifting expectations around the minimum domestic space required for settlement resulting from experiences living in densely populated towns, cities and refugee camps during the conflict. Having grown accustomed to the habits and practices of urban living and the sociality associated with it, many returnees had few complaints about living in close quarters with neighbors than they might have previously. I will turn to these practices and preferences in the next chapter, but for the moment I merely wish to emphasize the impact that

these have had in re-enforcing the tendency toward dense settlement. While living close to neighbors was not problematized by residents, it was associated with some risks—notably the possibility of neighborly conflicts and the potential exposure to witchcraft. The need to ‘squeeze’ households between existing residential compounds reinforced residents’ desires to live near people that were already well known such as family or established friends since many perceived this to diminish.

In summary, efforts to direct returnee settlement patterns by UNHCR and local officials failed to materialize for a number of intersecting reasons. A lack of commitment on the part of officials in supporting such a goal made the achievement of the settlement plan unlikely, at the same time that chronic insecurity made returnee designated neighborhoods less attractive for settlement. Changes in attitudes toward urban living that occurred during displacement meant that dense settlement became more socially acceptable. But these social changes further strengthened preferences that settlement be mediated through strong social ties of family or clan, or alternatively through long-established friendly or neighborly relationships because residents considered these relationships important in minimizing the negative aspects of close quarters living.

Cultivable Land: Accessing Productive Resources

As I have shown, during the war a group of soldier-traders and well connected merchants came to dominate economic activity in Budi county by controlling movement, expropriating agricultural produce creating a frontier economy that both funded the conflict and enriched individuals. Peluso and Lund (2011) write that the creation of these kinds of frontier economies often depends on the emergence of new ‘common sense’ which legitimizes the claims of new actors. In Chukudum, the legitimacy of a militarily connected commercial and political elite to determine access to land and other productive resources was never fully accepted by local residents. As people

returned to Chukudum, what authority these actors had been able to assert through force of arms quickly began to fade as prior socially mediated forms of land control gained traction.

So far I have been discussing re-socialization of space—how it is gendered and based on certain kinds of familial, neighborly and ethnic ties—that occurred in Chukudum town as people returned from displacement, whether from the nearby mountains or from the refugee camps in Uganda or Kenya. Up to this point I have focused on access to land for housing within the central areas of town. I have shown how socially determined expectations encouraged those with authority over land to allow returning refugees to settle on their land, in order to *effectively* reclaim land from soldier-traders that dominated Chukudum during the conflict.

However, social expectation regarding productive land differed considerably. But, just as granting rights for returnees and new migrants to settle in the town were used to unmake the war-time frontier by re-socializing space, even the more exclusionary practices governing the distribution of garden land worked—albeit in a distinct way—to re-assert Didinga authority over productive land, natural resources and pasturage within the county.⁴¹ Given the centrality of subsistence agricultural production as a livelihood practice, it is not surprising that access to productive land, at least in the areas adjacent to town, was more rigidly governed and in some cases, hotly contested.

In the wake of return migration to Chukudum, access to cultivable lands was not so easily acquired as was housing. Productive land near town remained largely under the authority of those who had previously lived in town, with the descendants of early settlers and prominent past leaders most likely to have access to larger plots of land. However by virtue of their Didinga identity, most

⁴¹ While the re-negotiation of grazing rights is an important to an understanding of the spatial organization of Chukudum, I will not be discussing this in detail for a couple of reasons. First, while pastoral production is central to Didinga livelihood strategies, very few of those who owned substantial herds lived in Chukudum. Those that did own livestock tended to keep their animals with relatives based in other villages in the county. Secondly, persistent cattle raiding at the time of my research meant that for my personal safety, I chose not to pursue lines of research that would place me in direct proximity with cattle in order to limit my exposure to the possibility of being caught up in a raid. For this reason, I was not able to gain detailed knowledge about grazing practices and how rights to pasturage were negotiated and contested.

returnees could access productive lands somewhere in the county. As in many parts of South Sudan, the people of Budi County do not conceive of their rights to use the land in the ways that are common to western capitalism. Rather than an understanding of land ownership based on exclusive property rights, rights to use land for cultivation, pasturage and resource extraction are more relationally defined (Allen & Turton, 1996; Driberg, 1939). In a national context characterized by both land abundance and cultural values that celebrate transhumant pastoral production, these kinds of relational property rights regimes are both commonplace, and generally accepted by the government, though to be sure this *is* changing. Still, across rural South Sudan rights to productive land is most often mediated through ethnic/tribal affiliation. Where land rights are contested, as they recently were violently in Magwi County—in November 2011—and in the capital city Juba—in February 2012—fault lines fall along ethnic lines and center around the questions of which collectivity's claims should prevail (as in Magwi), or of in-migrants' abuse of local hospitality through, for example, profiting from the resale of lands to which they have only usufruct rights.

As pastoral people practicing shifting cultivation, Didinga rights to land are negotiated through a set of cultural practices that associate particular clans with loosely defined geographical territories. Similar to the practices described by David Turton in his studies of a nearby pastoral ethnic group—the Mursi of Ethiopia—the movement into new areas for the purpose of cultivation and pasturage has long been practiced among people of Eastern Equatoria, including the Didinga (Allen & Turton, 1996; Driberg, 1939). Yet, as Turton writes, these territories are by no means fixed in the land, since *historically* new settlement areas were continually being subsumed into clan territories through the pioneering efforts of individual clan members (Driberg, 1939). Additionally, most settlements are not the exclusive domain of a particular clan or family; typically several clans are present in each village or area of settlement. Anthropologist and Colonial Officer J.H. Driberg

(1939) describes similar ‘pioneering’ practices nearly a century ago in his discussion of political and religious authority among the Didinga:

In most cases the original clan territories have been augmented by what we may call pioneers, by men who have gone outside the existing clan boundaries into No-man's land to cultivate or to settle.

(Driberg, 1939)

Driberg goes on to describe the political and ritual duties incumbent on such pioneers, which do not terminate if that person, or his direct descendants later abandon the area. That there are specific provisions to account for multiple movements within the ritual practice of Didinga people suggests that they were a common enough occurrence to warrant specific attention. These historical records detailing the process of progressive territorial encroachment into new and (perhaps) unoccupied lands are substantiated by origin stories, which recount the Didinga’s movement into the mountains that not make up their homeland and which explain the segmentation of Didinga off from Boya Laarim, Tennes, and Murle whose later journeys continued north and westward. So, too, do oral accounts that detailed personal and lineage migration histories that brought people and families to the comparatively new settlement of Chukudum over the course of the past century. While years of violence and displacement have no doubt impacted the culturally mediated ways in which land rights are obtained and distributed in Budi County, overall land abundance has meant that most Didinga people have the potential, at least, to lay claim to land *somewhere* for cultivation—whether through existing clan or familial ties or through pioneering activities of their own.

Of course the ability to access land in general is not the same as being able to access fertile plots in areas of rain abundance, especially close to town. Those fortunate enough to have descended from families that had first settled in the area fiercely guarded these gardens. Permanent rights to gardens near town, then, typically could only be secured by women marrying into one of these families. However, according to several people I spoke with, there were ways that people could gain access to land for “survival” on a more temporary basis. Compared with the relative ease of

acquiring land for housing, the process of arranging permission to use land for cultivation often involved more complex negotiations. Trying to make sense of land borrowing and land transfers, I sat down with the director of a local CBO (who is Didinga), who explained in detail the distinction between these two sets of practices:

If you are not from Chukudum, and the land that your family has is far away, then you can ask someone to use their land to survive. This can be done on a temporary or permanent basis...

...If it is temporary—which means you do not wish to claim that land as your own and pass it on—then no payment is expected. However, after the agreed upon time is over, a year or two years or whatever had been decided, then you must come back to renew the borrowing of the plot. The owner may or may not choose to renew the agreement. That is their choice.

Now, if you wish to have a claim to the land that can be passed on, then there is a payment, which is determined between the two parties. It used to be that payment was only in animals. But now it is possible also to use money.

(Interview, 08/04/2010, Chukudum)

As with land for housing, granting access to cultivable land was done informally and generally without the exchange of payment, at least when it was on a temporary basis.⁴²

However, in discussions with people about these kinds of borrowing practice, I found that these arrangements were often sources of tension and dispute. Because borrowing land was mediated through social relationships, and because the land was used in *productive* ways, borrowers had to invest significant energies in assuring that their relationship with the plot owner remained sound. It was not clear to me whether doing so, in practice, effected more informal material transfers from the borrower to the landholders, especially since people continually reiterated that they were not required to furnish any payment. Still several people explained that the maintenance of positive relations could involve offering of hospitality on the part of the borrower, including the

⁴² Despite this assertion that land could be transferred through sale, permanent formal transfers of land rights, however, were very much in the process of being negotiated at the time of my research. Land rights granted by county officials—who maintained that all land in the county was the property of the government—often had to be negotiated on the ground with the locally recognized of the land, with compensation payments a common practice. Even when these payments were made, land rights holders and their descendants might return at a later date to reassert land claims.

provision of cooked food or locally produced beer and alcohol. It is unlikely that these kinds of informal transfers were read as payments by either the borrower or the land holder, but they may still have been a burden on borrowers likely limited resources.

There were also other kinds of costs that were associated with this practice. One day as I walked through newly sprouted fields of maize and sorghum, I asked my research assistant Lokwar about what seemed to me a marked lack of conflict over productive land in the area. He smiled broadly and recounted the following story:

- Lokwar: No, no. But there *are* conflicts. Maybe you don't see them, but they are there...for example, say you have been given permission to use someone's garden. The garden is not yours, but you have arranged to use it for the season with the owners. Maybe you arranged it before, and they said you could use it for some years. So when the time comes you prepare the garden. You clear it, and turn the soil. These people, the owners, they can see that you are working the land, but they remain quiet. Then when you plant the garden, when the seeds have germinated and have begun to grow, they may come and plow that garden. They will tell you that you have not asked the proper permission. And your seeds will be lost.
- Leonie: But if they see that you have been working the land, why don't they come to you before?
- Lokwar: They cannot come before.

(Fieldnotes: Feb 26, 2010)

While I did not witness this kind of dispute directly, several other town residents confirmed in interviews and informal conversations that this kind of land borrowing for cultivation carried a certain amount of risk that the deal would fall apart, or that the land owner would return at a later point to demand something of borrowers that they could not provide.⁴³ Most felt that these

⁴³ I attribute my lack of direct knowledge of such conflicts to the timing of my research trips, which meant that I was away during April and May, the time during the planting season when this particular tactic was most likely to occur. It may also be the case that resorting to these tactics was relatively rare. Indeed, when this comment was made, I had only spent just over 3 months in town and that during the dry season when agricultural activity is at its minimum. Given my limited knowledge of the social landscape at that early stage in my research, I'm not sure I would have been able to recognize this practice if it did occur.

borrowing arrangements should be avoided if possible. Indeed the very way they described entering into such a relationship—begging land—carries the negative valence associated with the practice.

Yet despite the contentiousness of land borrowing relations near town, the plentitude of land in the county ensured that most returnees are able to make use of lands for cultivation elsewhere. The major limiting factors with respect to cultivation are distance to the garden, security, quality of soil, rainfall, and ground water rather than access per se. Local micro-climactic variation also plays a role, as it is common for people to maintain several gardens in different zones as security against weather. As pastoral people, practices of moving between places or between livelihood strategies, for example between pastoral production, agriculture, and trade are not seen to be at all problematic. What this means is that traveling to cultivate distant gardens is common practice, even for those with land in and near Chukudum town. For example, of those canvassed in my livelihood survey (n=79), more than 1/3 of respondents reported that they cultivated more than one garden, and 2/3 of reported gardens were *not* located in the immediate environs of Chukudum.

The tendency toward extensification of agricultural production, rather than intensification, is common to rain-fed agriculture, especially in areas where rainfall is highly variable both geographically and year by year. While the Didinga highlands can reliably count on sufficient rains,⁴⁴ this is not the case in the lowland areas where Chukudum is located. This has contributed towards a fairly dispersed geography of gardens in the lowlands. Areas known to receive more consistent rainfall, or to have access to underground water reserves are coveted, even when gardening in these locations may involve extended travel periods.

However, because of the distances, the question of insecurity has as much, if not more potential to impact decisions around garden siting as it does with housing. During the Chukudum

⁴⁴ Because of the reliability of rainfall in the mountains, much of this land has come under more intensive forms of cultivation. And because of the distinct climactic and historical factors impacting land use in these areas, an analysis of land rights there is not attempted by this research.

crisis, for example, many of the fertile areas around Chukudum were planted with anti-personnel mines, limiting resident's ability to engage in subsistence production until these areas were demined.⁴⁵ And the proliferation of military checkpoints during that time, opened up opportunities for the expropriation of harvests as farmers moved home from distance gardens. For these reasons, many cultivation areas had been abandoned during the war in favor of gardens in the highlands, which were easier to defend due to the military's unfamiliarity with the area and its fear of Lorot's militiamen. Many lowland areas were only more recently being re-opened for cultivation as people began to return to the county, and as local civil authorities gained more power to constrain expropriation by soldiers.

The extensification of cultivation into areas of prior use paralleled developments in the security situation. Notably, as mentioned previously, persistent raiding in the months following the failure of the 2009 rainy seasons limited the willingness of people to live and engage in cultivation in Moneta during the next rainy season, which began in April 2010. This area was known to be fertile, but its proximity to the western border areas where Logir raiders were particularly active meant that several families chose not to cultivate there that season. However when I returned to visit Chukudum in July of 2011, the security situation had improved enough that Moneta was again open to cultivation. As this suggests, there were considerable limits to the project of reasserting Didinga control over many areas of the County. While the socialization of space acts against frontier making projects, the ability to successfully re-establish authority over pasture and agricultural lands are recursively linked to questions of security, which in turn link the local area to broader struggles over an emergent and still malleable political order at the state and national scale.

⁴⁵ Demining took place at various times between 2000 and 2008 in the area around Chukudum. Despite the 2009 completion of demining operations there, in February 2010 several mines or unexploded ordinance (UXO) were discovered during an attempt to conduct a land survey of the town. Other mines and UXO have since been discovered.

The re-regulation of space in Chukudum has taken place through the reassertion of Didinga people's rights to regulate access to land and other resources within the town and its environs, through cultural norms relating to family and clan membership, in particular those around marriage, gender and generational relationships which largely determine land distribution and rights to other kinds of resources. Within this context, a remarkable openness defines the spatiality of everyday life for members of the Didinga community. It is an openness that has implications for the persistence of camp-based material practices, and the renegotiation of labor in relation to subsistence production, a topic I take up in the next chapter. It is an openness, also, that affects its own closures. These closures are for the most part directed at non-Didinga residents, including soldiers stationed in town, Dinka traders, Kenyan taxi drivers and teachers, or Ugandan construction workers. It is to these closures that I now turn.

CLOSING THE FRONTIER: OTHER EXCLUSIONS

My story follows returnees to Chukudum, and so my focus so far has been tightly directed towards those who fled the conflict, towards those who called the area home. The unmaking of the frontier produced a number of benefits for Didinga residents of Chukudum. But as a re-socialization of space based on ethnically defined customary beliefs and practices, it brought into being other forms of closures for those who could not claim access to resources by way of their ethnic, clan and familial affiliations. These include the Dinka traders, whose shops supply local residents with key commodities, the Rwandan brothers who arrived to set up grinding mills in Chukudum after getting to know Didinga and Kakuma camp; the Kenyans plying the roads in their taxis, and the Ugandans with their fly-by-night construction operations and modest 'hotels.'⁴⁶ Despite the closures, these groups prosper through extracting what meager wealth they are able from a comparatively captive market. On the scale of global capitalism, these were but minor accumulations. While profits were

⁴⁶ A 'hotel' in South Sudanese parlance is a small restaurant where prepared foods and beverages can be purchased and consumed. They do not provide accommodation.

scaled back compared to the kind of ‘takings’ that occurred at the hands of soldier-traders during the Chukudum Crisis, still, the leaching of local wealth out of the area by those continuing to operate trading businesses and/or provide services was an object of concern for many local residents. In this final section of the chapter, I examine how the re-assertion of locally rooted forms of authority also had the effect of balancing opportunities of profit making by traders and service providers through the control over space. This was accomplished through limitations on outsiders’ access to and productive use of resources, and complicated by persistent, yet targeted insecurity on the road.

The unmaking of the wartime frontier economy in Chukudum that occurred in the late 2000’s relies on an understanding of ethnically defined rights to land and resources that is common throughout South Sudan (Rolandsen, 2009). The specific sets of norms governing land use vary across locations, but the legitimacy of local authorities to determine how and by whom land is used is not typically challenged, especially in rural areas. In Chukudum this has taken the form of closing off a set of spaces, resources and practices to those perceived as outsiders—including agricultural and pastoral production, as well as excessive rent-seeking on the part of traders, taxi drivers, construction workers and the like. Because the reassertion of authority over the productive spaces of Budi county is based on norms relating to territory and ethnic belonging that are widely held in South Sudan, the exclusion from productive land and resources was not a point an overt point of tension at the time of my research. Yet while the authority of Didinga to determine settlement in their own areas was seen as legitimate (within limits), the recognition of this authority cannot be extracted from the history of past violence and the unstated threat of ongoing violence, which operated as an often unspoken foundation for the success of this process.

Chukudum is home to a small community of migrants to the area, both from within South Sudan, and from neighboring countries. Some of these migrants have lived in the town for decades, while others are more recent arrivals. By far the largest group is the Dinka community, which

comprises somewhere between 50-100 families. Many of these families trace their presence in Chukudum to the early 1990's when the violence following the SPLA split forced them to flee their home areas. A minority decided to move to the area after being stationed here or visiting as soldiers during the civil war (Fieldnotes, Chukudum, 02/2010). No longer considered to be IDPs, the Dinka remaining in Chukudum have chosen to stay on in the area rather than return to Bor. While not completely segregated from the local population, the majority of Dinka live in one of two neighborhoods the first adjacent to the market and the second adjacent to the hospital. The Dinka in Chukudum are predominantly traders, though several also work as medics, techs and administrators the local hospital. A handful of migrants from other parts of Eastern and Central Equatoria are also present, they live in scattered households dispersed in several of the more central neighborhoods in town. In comparison with the Dinka population, they are less visible as a distinct presence, perhaps owing to similarities in culture and religion (Catholic), and, often intermarriage with Didinga.

More recently (since the CPA was signed in 2005) the town has seen an influx of East African entrepreneurs, drawn by the prospect of the high profit margins assumed to be available in South Sudan. While the number and national composition of these comparatively mobile migrants fluctuates, they comprise a visible presence in the town's market as service providers (tailoring, prepared food, and an unlicensed pharmacy/clinic) and operate most of the passenger transport to the town. A majority of these are Kenyan by nationality, who have organized collectively on issues relating to their presence in town with local authority figures and government, especially in times of crisis. Finally there are a handful of migrants—primarily South Sudanese, but also a few internationals—that work running programs for ADRA and CDS the two organizations with permanent programming in the area. However non-local staff generally live on the premises of the organization's compounds where their programs are based.

Restrictions

Given the legacy of violent confrontation in Chukudum between Didinga and Dinka during the Chukudum Crisis, the exclusions that accompanied the unmaking of the frontier in Chukudum were in the first place targeted at the Dinka trader community (and also the military). Relationships between these groups remained tense, if overtly amicable, well after the end of the crisis. Calm is maintained through formal modes of accommodation of difference, especially in the political sphere, and informal norms relating to the limits to that accommodation. In public events and community meetings, for example, it is typical include at least one member of the Dinka community—usually the pastor or the leader of the trader’s association—on the roster of speakers.⁴⁷ Despite a public ethos of accommodation, simmering resentments persist among some, but certainly not all, Didinga residents of Chukudum against the ways in which largely Dinka soldier-cum-traders have been able to capitalize on their association with the SPLA leadership and set up lucrative commercial operations.⁴⁸

While the question of the Dinka presence often felt somewhat tense when I spoke of it with Didinga residents of town, when speaking with Dinka community leaders on this subject, they were clear to place intercommunal conflicts and tensions in the past, asserting that in the present things have calmed significantly and relations are good. The majority of Dinka living Chukudum had access to at least a small plot of land for housing, and those who engage in trade also were permitted to build temporary shops and storage buildings. From these endeavors, they were able make a living,

⁴⁷ During such events, translation is offered when required into English, Juba Arabic, and/or Didinga so that all members of the community, regardless of language can understand and participate in discussions. However, Dinka representatives are not expected to address explicitly political issues unless they directly touch on their personal business affairs, and are informally barred from holding positions in local government.

⁴⁸ These expressions of resentments are rarely made in public gathering where Dinka are present. Rather, they emerge in private discussions among friends and relatives, both in person and particularly *online*, and are more pronounced among Didinga in the diaspora, and those living in urban areas in South Sudan. They have not had to live in day-to-day proximity or interact with the Dinka traders that are currently living in Chukudum, which might cause them to reevaluate their beliefs. Those in the diaspora, in particular, may only have the traumatic memories of the Chukudum Crisis on which to base their opinions.

and in some case turn substantial profits. However, many of the Dinka residents were evasive or reluctant talk with me about how these rights were gained.⁴⁹ But, combining the picture gleaned through informal conversation with survey data on livelihoods, I was able to gain some idea about the logic determining Dinka access to productive resources in Chukudum, including access to land for cultivation.

Only one family, that I am aware of, had been given permission (by a Didinga neighbor) to use land for exclusively agricultural purposes (Livelihood and Income Generation Survey). Ayen, a woman of forty, had arrived in Chukudum, by way of Kakuma, in 1997. As a woman raising seven children alone, she worked as a cleaner at the hospital for a small wage. Her income, however, was not sufficient to support her children and she had asked to borrow land from one of her Didinga neighbors to supplement her salary. Her access to a garden was a fairly recent development, which she credited to her friendly relations with her neighbors. The uniqueness of her close relations across ethnic lines is reflected in data from the livelihood survey. Of the Dinka that I interviewed in my livelihood survey, Ayen was the only one to report that she hosted and participated in collective work parties, an important way that Didinga mobilized labor at key moments in the agricultural season. Her close personal relationship with neighbors and her willingness to engage in the social and labor exchanges common to Didinga culture, made her access to land possible. Indeed when I arrived to interview her, I interrupted her chatting with a handful of neighbors, many of who were Didinga, who had gathered in her compound to socialize over a small bottle of *mokoyo*. As noted, Ayen's situation was an exception. Dinka residents of Chukudum were generally limited to planting food crops on their residential plots, in the fairly limited space directly adjacent to their homes. The

⁴⁹ While I was welcomed to speak with traders informally about their history in the area, and often invited to chat with them at their shops, when I approached the Dinka more formally as a community, I was viewed with more suspicion, with gate-keepers fearing that my questions might bring to light histories best left in the past.

restriction on agricultural production extended to migrants from other backgrounds as well. With the exception of small home gardens, it was difficult for outsiders to gain the kind of confidence with local landholders to enter into the kinds of land borrowing relations I described earlier.

Similar restrictions were in effect in relation to migrant access to other kinds of environmental resources, such as fuel-wood, thatching grass, and pasturage. While long time Dinka residents were not prevented from gathering fuel wood and thatching for their own use, collection for re-sale in the market was not seen as appropriate. Persistent insecurity contributed to many migrants' hesitancy to risk spending time in the 'bush.' East African migrants were even more reluctant to engage in fuel-wood collection, as their standards for acceptable risk are notably different from Southern Sudanese standards. Fear, rather than outright prohibition or targeted attacks kept migrants from gathering environmental resources. At the same time, the majority of Dinka families and East African entrepreneurs had other sources of income which they could use to purchase fuel wood. Through market purchases, migrants were able to avoid the perceived danger of fuel-wood collection.⁵⁰

If fuel wood collection was viewed as a somewhat risky endeavor for migrants, the association between livestock production and potentially mortal danger was even more pronounced. Though I lack detailed knowledge about the ways in which grazing rights were regulated among various Didinga clans and geographic areas, it was clear from conversation with both the Dinka and Didinga residents of town that members of the Dinka community were effectively barred from raising livestock in the county. The Dinka displaced to Chukudum in 1991 had arrived without their substantial herds, and this set the groundwork for contemporary restriction on livestock keeping by

⁵⁰ I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

Dinka in the area.⁵¹ In South Sudan, tending herds of cattle and other livestock is a very risky endeavor. Owing to the prevalence of raiding, South Sudanese cowherds are well-armed bands of young men who do not fear to defend both their cattle and their grazing areas. Given the potential for violence, it would be unthinkable for a group of migrants to begin raising livestock with out first seeking permission from local authorities. Not to do so risks prompting a cycle of attack and counter-attack that might escalate to communal violence. Though not many cattle were kept in Chukudum town, aside from those brought for sale or slaughter, the entrance into this sector by Dinka town residents or any other outside actor would be viewed with extreme suspicion, if not outright violence.⁵²

The division determining access to productive resources and settlement rights hinged on the spatially salient distinction between the security of town and the insecurity of the ‘bush.’ Importantly, knowledge and fear of the ‘bush’ operated differentially between native Didinga and migrants, coding particular places as familiar or risky, respectively. The bush, then, emerges as a locus of wealth production as well as danger, in which local knowledge and belonging acted as a gatekeeper. This is not to say that going to the bush was not also dangerous for locals—it was. Rather, better knowledge of the physical and socio-political landscape at the micro-scale placed

⁵¹ In contrast, Dinka displaced to Yei as a result of the SPLA split brought their substantial herds with them. The presence of Dinka and their cattle in the area lead to conflicts with the host community, who complained that the presence of so many cattle adversely affected their own, agriculturally based livelihoods (Caux, 2005).

⁵² During the time of my fieldwork there was, however, one outsider who managed to flaunt this prohibition with out significant consequence. He was surveyor hired by the County Commissioner to draw up a plan for the town. While in town, he was considered to be the Commissioners guest and lived in his compound. Stranded with out payment when the Commissioner was removed unexpectedly from the post, the Surveyor took to buying fattened goats in the market with the intention of donating them to an Islamic school he supported in Juba or his home district. As he waited for payment, he had to maintain the health of his purchased goats and did so by taking them to pasture daily in the lower reaches of one of the occasional streams that cut through town. His actions were tolerated, though many doubted his intention to donate the animals, knowing the price that such animals fetch in urban areas. If people were bemused by his actions, several factors militated against any direct confrontation in this case. These are a) that the number of goats in question was rather small (less than 40), b) that he was viewed as a professional in town for official purposes, c) he was the personal guest of the (ex) County Commissioner, and d) it was seen as a temporary transgression since it was not expected that he would set up residence in town. Because of his unique position, the surveyor was allowed to continue to graze his goats.

locals in a better position to more accurately assess risk factors and take appropriate precautionary measures. For migrants to the area, the general insecurity of the area articulated with a lack of intimate knowledge of the landscape to compound the socially enforced restrictions on their access to productive resources, a topic that I move to next.

THE BUSH AND THE AMBUSH

In this final section of the chapter I explore the ways in which very real violence and social imaginaries of danger re-enforced local attempts at un-making the frontier in Chukudum. In tackling a discussion of the spatial impact of such imaginaries in Budi County, it is important to stress the opacity of the operation of violence in this context. The actors that produced local insecurity were diverse and shifted over time—they included raiding parties, soldiers, criminal gangs which were perhaps connected to political actors with varying agendas. Often it was not clear who was involved, what their motives were, nor the intended effect. Residents of Chukudum were rarely implicated as responsible for violent incidences. Yet, their lives were perhaps the most adversely affected by ongoing insecurity and the characterization of their hometown as a violent place. In attempting an analysis of the imaginaries of danger that defined the county, my argument addresses the spatial *impact* of violence, and does not extend to the logic that actually produced violence in the area.

The Bush

In her book on smuggling networks in the Chad Basin, Janet Roitman uses the terms ‘bush’ and the frontier interchangeably. Concerned with illicit trade and the production of insecurity in the border regions of northern Cameroon, she sees both as “elusive and yet promising domains of a possible future” (Roitman, 2005, p. 102). While both the frontier and the bush are associated with dangerous places at the margins of political authority, in South Sudan, the meaning of ‘the bush’ carries a set of valences that are distinct from the way I think about frontiers. In South Sudan, ‘going to the bush’ is the most common way that people talk about their participation in the armed struggle

for national liberation. Given this history, ‘the bush’ is imbued with a set of political meanings and values that extend beyond the more economically oriented definition provided by Roitman. The bush as a place of both danger and self-knowledge articulates with southerner identity based in struggle against Arab (foreign) occupation and political domination. So, rather than a place at the margins of government control, the bush carries with it a sense of political power or authority based in intimate knowledge of the local physical and social landscape. Where frontiers free up landscapes and resources from local control and authority—often through violence—the danger of the bush is mediated through social imaginaries of autochthony. Dangerous only for outsiders, the bush is interpolated through local knowledge. For those not familiar with the area, the bush then becomes a place to fear and avoid, while those who possess critical local knowledge can move through these spaces, make use of the resources there and extract wealth without fear of violence. As noted earlier, the lack of local knowledge manifested itself as fear among non-Didinga residents of Chukudum, limiting their forays into the bush to collect fuel wood or building materials, though they felt comfortable moving freely within the town itself. Yet during my stay in Chukudum, this slowly began to change as the entire town came to be associated with the danger of the ‘bush’ in the wider South Sudanese context.

By some standards, Chukudum is nothing like the bush, it is a small town with a bustling market and the seat of local government. The town, recently connected into broader circuits of trade and mobility by the repair of the road, had every indication of becoming an important secondary trade hub, through which agricultural surpluses and livestock could be funneled to reach urban markets. However, occasional, targeted insecurity on the road contributed to the perception of the town as “the real bush” by outsiders. While the logic behind these violent operations remained unclear, road ambushes contributed to an imaginary of danger that gave many outsiders considering travel to the area pause.

Ambushes

The road to Chukudum was re-graded a month before my arrival in town at the beginning of the 2009-10 dry season, transforming a treacherous journey that more often than not involved the vehicle becoming so mired in mud that passengers were forced to sleep on the road into an easy high-speed ride lasting 45 minutes. With the connection that the new road embodied, Chukudum became more closely enmeshed in the broader political economy of the state. In effect, the road transformed Chukudum from an outpost in the bush, to a market town. Not surprisingly, the change resulted in a significant increase in traffic on the road since it was no longer necessary to have a four-wheel drive vehicle to make the trip. Now that the journey could be made with low clearance sedans and station wagons, entrepreneurial taxi drivers enthusiastically took up the route. Most of these were Kenyans who already regularly carried goods and people into South Sudan from the border at Nadapal/Lokichoggio, and who merely extended their reach. The increase in road traffic brought Chukudum more actively into regional trading networks, lowering prices on at least a few goods and making it easier for Didinga residents, especially youth to start petty trade operations and set up small shops. While there had been a handful of Kenyans living in Chukudum before this, the road improvement made the town more attractive, prompting more Kenyans to consider staying in town on a semi-permanent basis. Within a few months, some of these had set up shops, bars and other businesses in the main market.

The ambushes started about six months later. At first, it was not at all clear that the attacks on the road were distinct from local cattle raids. Poor rains in the 2009 growing season had resulted in poor harvests, and contributed to a marked increase in raiding following dry season. Raiders from neighboring counties were responsible for the theft of over 1,500 head of cattle and at least 20 deaths over the course of that dry season. So when an NGO vehicle was ambushed along the road in March, killing the driver—who was from Chukudum—it was assumed initially that the attacks

were related to raiding activities, and responsibility placed on neighboring tribes.⁵³ However, when the ambushes persisted during the rainy season when raiding typically falls off local residents and the authorities sought new explanations for the violence. Between June and August 2010 several more vehicles were targeted. A few were able to escape without injury to passengers through the astute action of drivers, but a vehicle carrying several members of Chukudum's Kenyan community was not so lucky. Two people were shot, one fatally as they traveled to Chukudum with large sums of cash—wages owed to the crew constructing a local politician's home. Though the money wasn't stolen, it was clear that those responsible had prior knowledge of the trip. This indicated those participating in the ambushes were likely residents of the county, since those less familiar with the area would lack the kind of detailed knowledge of expected journeys that the bandits possessed.

Following on the heels of this event, a row between local residents and the owner of a pharmacy over his friendly relations with a married Didinga woman that saw his shop burned down and a vehicle vandalized, further terrifying Kenyan town residents and those taxi drivers that regularly drove the Chukudum route. As a community, the Kenyans took these violent events as a message. They boarded up their shops and collectively evacuated the town, at least temporarily, to allow the situation to cool down. The exodus drew the attention of officials at the state level, who sent a military task force to track down the bandits, and provided the county police with a vehicle to assist with the search. After the deployment of the military, road ambushes declined briefly. A few arrests were made, but ambushes pick up again the following dry season. The persistence of the ambushes signaled to many the complicity of higher-level political or military involvement, though again who was actually involved and what their motivation was remained unclear.⁵⁴

⁵³ Cattle raiding is a generally a seasonal activity in South Sudan, occurring in the dry season, when agricultural activity tapers off and cattle are more quickly and easily moved across great distances.

⁵⁴ The County Commissioner in power at height of the attacks in 2010 was heavily criticized for his failure to seriously address the issue. Less than a year later, he was removed from his post. Soon after, her was arrested—accused of being

The attacks also prompted UN's OCHA to raise the security level on the road to three (requiring armed escort). While the security restrictions pertain to UN agencies only, most NGOs and many private drivers adhere to the recommendations. A security level of three also meant that the two NGOs with a permanent present in Chukudum had more difficulty recruiting staff. Other organizations based in the nearby urban centers of Torit and Kapoeta cut or curtailed existing programs and refrained from proposing new projects. One NGO worker had this to say about resuming operations in Chukudum, "Travel to Chukudum? No thank you. I do not wish to die. I value my life more than that" (Fieldnotes, Torit, 10/24/2011). The raised security level reinforced outsiders' assessments of the county as the 'real bush'—a place to venture only at your own personal risk.

Given the frequency of ambushes on the road, private taxi drivers were also more reluctant to travel the route between Chukudum and Kapoeta because of the risk to personal safety and the cut to their profits that accompanied the need to reserve one empty seat for off-duty soldiers picked up at the Camp 15 barracks to make the last and most dangerous stage of the journey. In the weeks directly following attacks, taxis often avoided the route altogether, significantly limiting mobility and trade in Chukudum. In the longer term, only more intrepid migrant traders or those with a long-standing presence in the community felt comfortable conducting business in the town. Others avoided the Budi County altogether or only drove through it on the journey between Torit and Kapoeta.

If, as Tsing (2005) writes, the frontier is as much an imaginative project as it is a material process, it is in this imaginative frame where the unmaking of the frontier has not been as successful in Chukudum. A feeling of wildness and danger accompanied all of the discussions I had with non-

behind the road attacks in an effort to have the headquarters of the county government moved to the other side of the county, where he was from. However, he was released a short while later, and the veracity of these accusations were never established.

residents about my work in Chukudum. It is undeniable that living in Chukudum entailed some degree of risk. The stories that were told about the fierceness and the violence of the residents of Budi County ricocheted through the social and professional networks of government workers, NGO staff and humanitarian agents leading to a general reluctance to initiate or continue programming in the area. However, the association of Budi County with violence—produced as much through rumor as it was through the UN’s designation of the it as a level three security area—had another effect as well. The deployment of violence along the Chukudum road had the effect of excising the area (albeit incompletely) from a broader South Sudanese frontier space, substantially limiting the influx of entrepreneurial migrants to the area.

CONCLUSION

The unmaking of the war-time frontier economy in Chukudum occurred through discursive, material, and occasionally violence actions that asserted the authority of Didinga people over both space and resources. As I have shown, these acts were addressed to entrepreneurial outsiders whose pioneering efforts sought profit in the absence of a coherent and consolidated political authority—an absence which is very common to post-conflict places. But the actions of Didinga residents were not merely reactionary ethnic boundary-making practices of a marginalized community, though they were that also. These same acts worked against the wholesale commoditization of their everyday lives—a project deemed all the more urgent because of Didinga people’s experiences during the war. Whether they spent the duration of the war in the camp—where people were wholly dependent on the receipt of commoditized food aid—or at home—where armed actors wrested control over land and resources from local people—residents of Chukudum were extremely wary of becoming too dependent on markets or aid. For them, control over land and environmental resources ensured some basic level of autonomy from commercial elites, bad road conditions, and security related inflationary pressures. People’s wariness of dependence on external actors—including traders, NGO

programs, the government, and international agencies—resulted in a general re-embracing of subsistence production. Still, as I will show in the next chapter, practices of production, consumption and exchange that characterized everyday life in Chukudum reflected a re-negotiation of material relations based on a new set of (post-conflict) social, spatial and economic constraints.

In this chapter, I explored the unmaking of a frontier economy in Chukudum that developed during wartime, as a result of residents returning to town after the end of conflict. Residents who had been displaced drew on commonly held understandings of autochthony to reclaim authority over land, resources and local politics. They did so through a set of discursive, material, and occasionally violent practices that reshaped social space in Chukudum. As I have shown, these actions were based in dense social relations that extend from the immediate family outward to kin, clan, neighbors and tribe. By their nature, the social ties that allowed Didinga to be successful in staking claims to the space of the town created their own exclusions—exclusions that were primarily directed at creating a livable balance between local residents, soldier-traders, entrepreneurial pioneers arriving in town who sought profits in the absence of any coherent and consolidated political authority.

If the reassertion of Didinga authority over space discussed in the previous chapter produced an exclusionsionary material politics—through a myriad of individual and collective acts of inhabitation—these same acts worked against the wholesale commoditization of everyday life and against the constitution of town residents as ‘free’ laborers. For many residents of Chukudum authority over land and access to environmental resources ensured a basic level of autonomy from commercial elites, bad road conditions, and security related inflationary pressures through the possibility of subsistence production. In Chukudum, decisions around labor, production and consumption reflected town residents’ experiences of dispossession, deprivation and dependency

during the war. These experiences further reinforced the value of laboring for subsistence to individual and family survival.

In the next chapter, I explore the various everyday practices that consolidated this particular organization of social, political and economic life in space. By focusing on everyday practices of laboring, I hope to examine “the dialectical relationship between the material circumstances and shared meanings animating individual practice and constituting social categories” (Rankin, 2004: 49). It is through the practices of everyday life where of autochthony and difference, work and survival, family and responsibility are made material. Though one reading of the situation in Chukudum could be that what occurred represented a reactionary move by a marginalized community seeking to protect their interests against outsiders, I make the case that an attention to everyday practices illuminates the ways in which the returnees sought to create spaces that allowed some degree of autonomy from the various forms of insecurity that characterized life in rural South Sudan.

CHAPTER 5
PRACTICE: CHUKUDUM
SUBSISTENCE RECONSIDERED



An Afternoon in the Market with James

I meet up with James in the early afternoon at the county headquarters where he works in the administration office. He had asked me to stop by around noon so that he could attempt to use my cell-phone to make a call. It is only recently that this has been possible, as mobile signals from a new cell tower across the border in Uganda just barely manage reach town. I have had the most success in getting reception by climbing the high granite dome in the middle of town, but James says that he was told that out on the south side of town the signal is even stronger. We walk together through town, picking up 1000 Ugandan Shillings worth of airtime and an Ugandan SIM card in the market along the way. From there we head out to the new road that, 8 months earlier, cut a path

through a densely settled neighborhood, destroying homes and forcing tens of families to relocate. The road is wide, sunny and smooth. Checking every few meters for a signal, we finally manage to get a few bars near one of the dozers used in the road construction. James climbs up into the seat, and attempts his call while I wait. The signal is not strong enough, and we proceed further along the road to the southern outskirts of town, where James tries, again unsuccessfully, to make his call.

When he gives up, I reclaim my phone and we head back toward the center of town, this time crossing through the market. James has just received his salary and wants to pick up some things for home. With over a hundred small shops in the main market, I frequented only a handful where I had come to know the owners who more often than not invite me to sit with them for a while, chatting about life and politics. James steers us to a shop that I haven't been to before. James greets the shop owner warmly and they talk about recent events in a mix of Arabic and English. Paul, the shop owner is Dinka, and though he has lived in town for over a decade—his grasp of Didinga is limited to what is required for his business to function: greetings, numbers, and the names of common items. He and James exchange jokes, and voice their opinions about local issues—the new commissioner, the planned market relocations, the wash out of the road at Ngarera—as well as national politics.

As they are talking the Paul takes out a small notebook and makes a few calculations, finally coming up with a number. James asks for a rundown, and they discuss a few items before coming to an agreement on how much James owes for the goods he had taken on credit over the past few months. We buy 5 liters of cooking oil, a few kilos each of beans and lentils, packaged wheat flour from Kenya, some royoco seasoning and, as a treat, 3 liters of concentrated pineapple 'juice' syrup for his four children. Paul totals it all up and James hands over 250 SDG, nearly all of the money he received as salary earlier that week.

After James settles with Paul, we make our way back through the market, stopping frequently as people call us over to greet them. As a county worker, a very gregarious person, and a bit of a playboy, James is well known around town. Today people are eager to talk with him because of a recent scandal with the county government where 60,000 SDG (roughly US \$25,000) disappeared from the administration office. Nearly everyone in town suspected that the Ugandan construction crew working to rebuild the county offices had stolen the money. The county owed them 45,000 SDG and was refusing to pay until the job was finished. Then, a couple of weeks ago, they packed up

all of their equipment and disappeared. One day they were there, the next morning they were gone. When the money was found to be missing from the administration office the next Monday, the new commissioner ordered the arrest of everyone who had access to the office, including James—who spent several nights in the county’s jail. Free now, and cleared of wrongdoing, town residents were eager to hear James’ side of the story. Every 50 meters or so, we stop and James is asked to recount what had happened, and what action he would take next.

A walk that usually takes 15 minutes extends to over an hour. As the delays to our journey continue, I begin to get anxious to head home. Karina, James’ wife, had asked me when I left to pick up some meat for the main meal of the day. The longer I stay, the later we all will eat. I mention this to James and he just shakes his head, tells me not to worry about it. By this hour, he reminds me, the butcheries will likely be sold out anyway. Instead, he pulls me to sit down with him in a discreet courtyard doubling as an open-air bar behind another friend’s shop. This shop owner is Didinga, and immediately the two fall into a heated, though friendly discussion. Chairs are brought out, and bottles of Tusker, a popular beer imported from Kenya, are opened.

Not surprisingly, criticisms of the new commissioner dominate the conversation. They voice complaints about his military mentality, heavy-handed tactics and speculate about his current whereabouts. Since his appointment to the office more than a month ago, he has spent only a few days at the county offices in Chukudum, leaving many to wonder what this might mean for the county government. But the two—young, educated and politically ambitious—also discuss shuffles in the state and national government that have taken place since the first-ever elections in April. They talk about who has been disciplined for going against the party—some by running as independents, others for secretly campaigning on behalf of independent candidates—and what it might mean for them that a Didinga has been appointed the state minister of health. Another round of Tuskers are brought out and the discussion shifts to me, to what I think of life here, how it compares to life in America, and eventually to the question of who I am going to marry—a perennial favorite topic of conversation. After finishing our bottles of beer, we take our leave heading home with our purchases.

We reach home at dusk, hungry. Karina has prepared a mixture of greens, tomato, okra and soft squash collected from her rainy season garden for dinner. The children are already sitting down on a mat to eat. Karina breaks from her meal and prepares a plate

for James, who calls his half brother and nephew to come and eat with him. When they have eaten their fill, James calls his young sons over to finish the portion.

Tonight, Karina is in good spirits, despite our failure to bring home some meat for her to cook. She is happy for the cooking oil, and other items. Her oil supply had run out a few days before, making our most recent meals bland, watery and somewhat unsatisfying. And, when the children see the pineapple syrup, they jump-up to look for cups, the two oldest fighting over the biggest one. The treat of juice enlivens the meal, giving the night a festive air. None of us can help but smile as her two sons argue over who gets the last sip of 'juice,' the younger one so tired he can hardly stay awake through dinner.

Other nights, when James arrives home well into the night, empty handed and tipsy from an evening of socializing with his friends, the atmosphere is not so light. Occasionally the two argue well into the night, with Karina challenging James about his inability to provide meat for meals, clothes for the children, and, most of all, about his absences, and James countering that purchases made with his salary are his discretion, and that socializing as he does is necessary if he wishes to keep his job and move up in local government.

INTRODUCTION

The afternoon I spent with James in the market highlights some of the practices and micro-encounters that make up the everyday struggles for life, livelihood and survival in Chukudum. As a low level civil servant in the county administrative offices, James is one of a minority of town residents that can claim a government salary. And despite his 'working class' status, he is clearly still struggling—forced by necessity to make purchases on credit in the market, to perform his subordinate political status publicly, and to account for himself to his wife when he returns home. As the chapter follows James, his family, and several other town residents, I examine the social renegotiations of value and labor, production and reproduction—that were at the center of town resident's struggles for survival, and explore their political and gendered fall-out.

As refugees returned to Chukudum, many town residents complained bitterly about the increasing importance of money for meeting basic everyday needs—signaling the persistence of commoditization even as subsistence production once again became possible for most returnees.

Yet the story of post-return Chukudum is not one of its progressive inclusion in an expansionary capitalism. Rather, I argue that the precarity that characterized the conditions of labor in South Sudan combined with the spatial politics described in the previous chapter to prompt a widespread reassessment of the value of subsistence production on the part of town residents that worked against the commoditization of land and labor in Chukudum.

I have argued that the reassertion of Didinga authority over space that accompanied return migration produced an exclusionsionary material politics directed at an ethnically distinct commercial elite. If exclusion was produced through a myriad of individual and collective acts of inhabitation—these same acts worked against the wholesale commoditization of everyday life and against the constitution of town residents as ‘free’ laborers. In Chukudum, decisions around labor, production and consumption reflected town residents’ experiences of dispossession, deprivation and dependency during the war. These experiences further reinforced the value of laboring for subsistence (rather than for uncertain wages) to both individual and family survival. For many residents of Chukudum authority over land and access to environmental resources ensured a basic level of autonomy from commercial elites, bad road conditions, and security related inflationary pressures through the possibility of subsistence production.

In this chapter, I contextualize the revaluation of subsistence production among Chukudum residents by examining the production of value and the ways in which it articulates with gender norms, local political culture, ideas of autochthony, and a failing South Sudanese economy. I explore the ways in which town residents grappled with these issues by offering a glimpse into the lives of a few of the town’s residents, who each in his/her own way attempt to strike a balance between subsistence agriculture, pastoral production, petty commodity production, trade and waged labor. While I highlight the particular constraints that each faced as individuals and families, for all the balance was struck in ways that offered as much autonomy from the precarity of the broader

political economy of South Sudan as was possible.

PRECARITY, LIFE WORKING AND LABORING PRACTICES

In Chapters 2 and 3, I explored how the spatialization of access to resources produced an active nexus of exchange between refugees and the host population. In the last chapter, I showed that returnees to Chukudum enacted parallel forms of exclusion, though in a much more limited way. I have argued that the result of the exclusions inherent in camp life resulted in survival increasingly being secured through everyday exchange relations—that is through barter, sale of rations and petty commodity production. If this is the case, it prompts us to ask to what extent did the spatial exclusions effected through return migration to Chukudum contribute to a similar deepening of commoditized material relations? And critically, how did it impact decisions about how and when to labor, under what conditions, and for what reward.

In looking to the choices around laboring—whether for salaries, incentives, sustenance, or social recognition—among Chukudum residents (returnee and otherwise), I shed light on the ways in which residents confront the precariousness of relying on dry land farming and the precarity of engagement with a broader political-economy that does not value their labor. Following Butler, I distinguish between precariousness, which is inherent in all life, and precarity, which denotes how vulnerability articulates with contemporary political and economic systems:

Precariousness and precarity are intersecting concepts. Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is by no means guaranteed...Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death. Such populations are at increased risk of disease, poverty, starvation, and exposure to violence with out protection.

(Butler, 2009, p. 26)

While Butler focuses most explicitly on the relationship between precarity, violence and the state, I build on her development of the term and on feminist and critical analyses of the increasingly

‘flexible’ conditions of re/productive labor under neoliberalism to come to an understanding of the nature of work in one of the least developed countries in the world (Butler, 2003; 2009). Precarity, in this sense, denotes the exposure to reduced life chances mediated not only through state centered politics, but also through contemporary Post-Fordist geo-economics (Meehan & Strauss, 2012; Ong, 2006; Pratt & Yeoh, 2003; Wright, 2006). As a concept, precarity offers a new lens to think *through* labor in contexts in which opportunities to engage in socially valued work are scarce—one that goes beyond the binaries between formal work and informality, or productive and reproductive labor to capture the uncertainty that confronts a majority of workers in places like South Sudan, characterized by prolonged violence, deliberate underdevelopment and a barely functioning state apparatus.

In Chukudum, subsistence production is at the center of people’s negotiation of the precarity of the post-conflict political economy. I forward an understanding of subsistence as a set of practices that link together land, labor, production and consumption in ways that augment autonomy (Campesina, 2011; van der Ploeg, 2008). I seek to problematize the distinction between production and social reproduction instead of reifying the reproductive nature of subsistence. Clearly, subsistence comprises labor that is organized around and directed toward consumption that supports social reproduction, however, seeing subsistence as purely directed towards social reproduction elides critical questions surrounding ‘work.’ These include: What constitutes labor? How is it accomplished? Under what conditions? Where or when does work end? How do we understand the distinction between work and non-work? Questions such as these point to alternative understandings of laboring practices that move beyond Fordist notions of work that have remained discursively hegemonic despite major transformations in work over the last four decades.

In disrupting the re/production binary, I follow feminist scholars that have sought to blur the boundaries that distinguish productive and reproductive labor in ways that recuperate the

productivity of un-waged work, as well as that destabilize the distinction between public and private, work and non-work (Costa, 1980; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Meehan & Strauss, 2012; K. Mitchell, Marston, & Katz, 2004). In particular, I draw from the work of Mitchell Marston and Katz (2004), who in their introductory essay to the book *Life's Work* make a considered exploration of the re/production binary, bridging various generations of Marxist and feminist scholarship to highlight the *productive* nature of unwaged work. They do so to forward an understanding of the shifting nature of work under post-Fordist production regimes:

What we are signaling is the interpolation of subjects as *life workers*—the rendering of permanently mobilized bodies in new kinds of technologies of power...This widespread and profound shift in both the material spaces and cognitive understandings of life's work is galvanized by and facilitates the complete breakdown between worlds, such that the domains of work and of home and leisure are indistinguishable from each other—and for many *this now forms the contemporary "habitus."*

(Mitchell, Marston & Katz, 2004, p. 3)

They draw attention to the ways in which people as workers increasingly face the condition of constantly being required to be available as labor power in all spheres of life—a condition that renders the distinction between 'life' and work difficult to identify and sustain. Characterized by labor that is provided flexibly for just-in-time production, post-Fordism as a logic of accumulation has grown out of increasingly complex, and shifting modes of production in a globalized economy (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Harvey, 1989; K. Mitchell et al., 2004; Peck, 2001).

While discussions of post-Fordist production have come to be common in anthropological and geographical analysis of neoliberalism, much of the scholarship has focused on new regimes of flexible work that are closely tied to industrial production—whether in agriculture, manufacturing, services, or care-work (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000; England, 2010; Harvey, 1989; Katz, 2004; McDowell, 2004; Peck, 2001; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Sparke, 2006; Wright, 2006). Comparatively less scholarship has explored the unique complexities of laboring in post-colonial places characterized by

prolonged economic decline, political crisis and violent conflict (Comaroff, 2007; 2011; Hunter, 2010; Nguyen, 2010; Simone, 2004).

One scholar who has taken up this challenge is anthropologist Daniel Hoffman, who has extended discussions of post-Fordist labor regimes to examine what flexible labor looks like in an African post-colony. In his work on militias fighting on behalf of the government in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Hoffman (2011b) argues that conditions of labor in much of West Africa are broadly similar to those that obtain in contemporary post-Fordist economy. This comparison allows him to think through the production of violence as a particular form of labor, which can be mustered in contingent and flexible ways depending on the needs of various political and commercial actors, including but not limited to the state. Hoffman argues that a reading of the potential to do violence as a particular form of labor allows us to better grasp the improvisational and precarious *work* that goes into both the production of violence and the extraction of resources (such as gold, timber and diamonds) that characterized labor during the Mano River War (Hoffman, 2011, pp. 41-2). Drawing on years of ethnographic research with combatants and ex-combatants, Hoffman makes a compelling case for reading the potential to engage (or refrain) from violence and a key form of labor, one that was fungible with other forms of more “productive” labor—such as diamond mining, timber extraction and so forth.

Clearly, there is much to distinguish the various conflicts of the Mano River War with that of the second Sudanese civil war, and my project is not to argue that violent labor functioned in a similar way in the Sudanese conflict. I have neither the data nor the inclination to do so at this juncture. Rather I wish to bring attention to one part of Hoffman’s argument, which I think may bring some insight into the ways in which practices were re-worked as people began to return to Chukudum. Drawing on the work Paolo Virno, Hoffman argues that two critical factors in such a post-Fordist arrangement of labor are “an inability to distinguish paid from unpaid work, and the

paramount importance of opportunism.” (2011b, p. 44). For Hoffman, the flexible provision of labor (including violent labor) in the African post-colony rests on the unpredictability of compensation for that labor (Hoffman, 2011, pp. 43-5). In the diamond fields, just as in the battlefield, the compensation for work done was highly contingent on factors that are close to random, completely outside of the control of both the worker/soldier and the employer/commander.

Additionally, in a context in which personal connections to powerful patrons can be converted, sometimes at least, into opportunities for material gain, any number of activities might be turned into an opportunity to accrue wages. Stopping in for tea, visiting the market, passing along a critical piece of news, doing small favors for a friend or relative—all of these involve the building of relationships, and the ‘working’ of networks and could be considered labor. As Hoffman puts it, this has the effect of “the extension of the requirements of labor into all forms of social existence (into life itself).” Hoffman describes the incredible energy involved in participating as a laborer in such a context. Doing so requires constant effort—in practice it is a certain form of flexible mobility and entrepreneurship of the self, that when combined with a bit of cunning and a quick wit just *might* translate in to a wage. As this description suggest, the precarity of such an existence is extreme. And while the potential for spectacular reward is often enticing, the odds of actually achieving it are long.

For Hoffman, coming to terms with the everyday reality of work in these conditions requires an attention to “the micro-encounters” of everyday life that constitute the never-ending search for basic sustenance (Hoffman, 2011, p. 43). This means a renewed attention to a variety of practices not typically considered work—tending to patronage relations, for example, or hanging out in the market playing dominos or pool. Even the act of waiting might well be work, when conducted in ways that visibly announce one’s potential to be available for labor. Hoffman’s reevaluation of what

constitutes labor—including but not limited to its extension to violence—challenges accepted understandings of the distinction between work and not-work.

In addition to Hoffman's work on violent labor, several other scholars have sought to extend an analysis of contingent labor and material gain by taking up an examination of *hustling*. Hustling, in this context, means creatively taking advantage of small opportunities to earn money in petty trade, fixing and other licit and illicit activities as they present themselves. Munive (2010), for example, describes the ubiquity of *hustling* among Liberia's youth, who must be continuously mobile and innovative in seeking out new ways to support themselves. The requirement to be constantly on the hustle is both stressful and exhausting, yet these activities do not carry with them the social recognition associated with work (Munive, 2010). This is true even when, as Munive reports, hustling can generate income on par with civil servant appointments. Despite being potentially lucrative, the level of precarity, lack of social respect and constant search for new opportunities makes hustling as a form of labor less attractive than waged employment.

In a similar vein, Nguyen (2010) writes of the material longing at the heart of practices of self-fashioning among young people in Abidjan—from the body-building practices of security guard hopefuls, to the ability to fast-talk people into fraudulent investments, to the re-working of sexual desires and practices. Here too, distinctions between work and that-which-is-not-work disappear as the every-day struggle for survival is tangled up with the labors of shaping the body, sharpening the ruse, and cultivating particular sexual desires (Nguyen, 2010). Hunter (2010) too explores the “materiality of everyday sex and love” in post-Apartheid South Africa. Hunter (2010) teases out the complex terrain in which emotional and sexual labor are deployed, valued and remunerated in a context of chronic unemployment and increasing material insecurity. Under these conditions of work, the totality of everyday life is subsumed into the practice of potential labor and material exchange.

The impulse to examine the ways in which such a constellation of practices produce value is important, because it opens up deeper questions around the nature of value—both symbolic and material—and the gendered nature of its production. It prompts us to ask: Just how *productive* is the labor of opportunity seeking and patron cultivation, when compared to the kinds of labor that make up women’s everyday practices that produce the very material things—such as cooked food and clean water—that contribute to basic sustenance? How do variously situated actors engage with and weigh such competing notions of value in their decisions around how to expend their time and energy? And what might these divergent notions of value mean for choices around subsistence production?

Bringing these diverse understandings of work, labor and the everyday together, I seek to ground my analysis of the everyday practices that ensured sustenance, or at the very least survival, in Chukudum in a re-assessment of subsistence production in a context where laborers, regardless of their occupation “...cannot reliably predict the possibilities of remuneration for their work” (Hoffman, 2011, p. 44). My focus on subsistence production reflects the centrality of these practices to survival among diversely situated town residents. In asking these questions around the allocation of labor to subsistence production, I also draw attention to the extreme precarity that characterizes the broader political economy of South Sudan, where dry land farming and transhumant pastoralism are viewed by many as the *most* secure livelihood options.

To put the choices of Chukudum residents around labor and subsistence in context, I begin by discussing briefly the precarity inherent in the alternatives to subsistence production for returning refugees—including looking for working in urban areas, working with international agencies or development NGOs, working for the government, trading and petty commodity production. As I will show, these alternatives presented significant challenges to securing a level of income that might sustain a family. The limited gains that could be achieved through other forms of waged work and

petty trade contributed to the re-centering of subsistence modes of production for Chukudum residents of all classes and migration histories.

Urban Attractions?

Recent scholarship on return migration after displacement documents suggest that, in many post-conflict contexts, many refugees prefer to seek out urban lives for themselves when they repatriate, rather than to return to rural areas with few amenities (Long, 2010; Omata, 2011; Zieck, 2004). Urban locations usually offer better health services, more economic opportunities, higher quality schools, as well as employment possibilities, while rural areas often lack even basic infrastructure and services, and confront ongoing security issues (Zieck, 2004; Long, 2010; Omata, 2011; Newhouse, 2012). These studies suggest that return migration must be seen in relation to broader social political and economic processes, chief among them urbanization.

While return migration to South Sudan has not exhibited the strong urban bias that has characterized other recent return streams, a significant proportion of returnees, particularly the young, have decided to stay on in urban areas. For many, the chimera of economic opportunity in the capital and other commercial centers is beguilingly attractive.⁵⁵ And life in densely settled refugee camps or in Khartoum has meant that many returnees find life in rural areas dull, having grown used to the more dense social life that characterizes urban areas (Duffield, 2008; Duffield, Diagne & Tennant, 2008; Martin & Mosel, 2011; Phelan & Wood, 2006).

Regardless of their assessment of opportunities and preference for urban lifestyles, returnees to urban areas of South Sudan faced a grim economic situation in which opportunities to work were extremely scarce. Dependent as much on the cultivation of patronage relationships (whether kin-

⁵⁵ South Sudan is in the midst of a period of rapid urbanization which has accelerated with the end of the civil war in 2005. Return migration of displaced people moving back South Sudan from the North and from surrounding countries has contributed significantly to this dynamic. Juba, the capital of South Sudan, has more than doubled in population since 2005 to over half a million inhabitants (Martin & Mosel, 2011), and other towns and cities report triple digit growth rates (Duffield, Diagne, & Tennant, 2008; Sluga, 2011).

based, ethnic, or military) as on luck, my interviews with job-seekers suggest that, for many the ways in which access to waged work could be achieved remained largely obscure. In an attempt to boost their chances of success in their jobs searches, educated young people seeking salaried employment in South Sudan's urban areas used mobility—between rural areas and the city, between the capital Juba and regional towns, between formal and informal work, and between neighborhoods within towns themselves—as an important tactic in their quest to achieve employment (Newhouse, 2012). More often than not these tactics are not successful. While cultivating connections is widely viewed as the only way to secure waged work, most young people are uncertain about what kinds of connections, with which people will result in success. This means job seekers expend significant labor in maintaining as many connections as possible—through practices such as co-habitation, social visits and domino games in addition to more traditional forms of labor exchange. Many young people feel deep frustration at this state of affairs, particularly because they recognized that the very fact that they needed to *cultivate* connections means that their claims on networks of patronage were more distal and carried less weight than the close relatives of NGO and government workers. Many felt they were effectively excluded from work, regardless of their qualifications or experience.

Even when young people were successful in finding casual manual work—in construction for example—several reported incidences where they had worked for employers who refused to pay them for their labor. Okello, recounted the following story about a employer refusing to pay him for his work in construction:

Okello: You know sometime you could go and work for somebody and he can refuse to pay you. Especially, you know, these brothers of ours from here. When I came here they can give you work. You will go and work and sometimes, [that person] he can even refuse to give you money, he can even decide to give you a gun.

Me: Oh?

Okello: That's it. [He will tell you] go and sell this one. Then how? How can you go and sell the gun, and you are not a soldier? That is not possible.

Me: So, it is a dangerous thing, to accept the gun?

Okello: Yeah you cannot even touch the gun. That one, it is just that you have to leave that place immediately. So it is not easy. I have been moving around doing even [anything]. You know for me I don't fear any [work], even a dirty work, [so long as it] is not stealing or robbing...I can do any kind of work, which will provide me money in a clean way.

(Interview 8, Torit, 10/25/2011)

As Okello's comments suggest, many urban residents struggle not only to find work, but also to get paid for it. As Okello explains later in the interview, it was common practice to work for weeks or even months before being paid. Okello reported that, in some instances, getting paid for work already completed entailed spending time tracking down an employer that was intentionally 'dodging' their employees in an effort to avoid giving them their wages. Despite his frustrations, Okello chose to remain in an urban center and continue to search for work.

However Okello's situation was distinct from many others who came to the city to look for work because was unable to return to his home area due to a family related dispute. Okello stayed in the city because he had no other option but to continue to search for work, yet, for many others return to rural areas and to subsistence production remained a viable alternative to a life based on urban hustling. Extended periods without work in urban centers caused many whom I interviewed to re-evaluate their choice to live in town. While young people, particularly the most educated among them, held strong preferences for becoming 'working class,' many also recognized that extended stays in the city without work were unsustainable. While not a welcome prospect, returning to their home village to cultivate the land was a present alternative to the struggles for life and survival in town.

Subsistence Reconsidered

The potential for most Southern Sudanese to engage in subsistence production constitutes an alternative to the prospect of perpetually making themselves available as a flexible labor force.

The possibility of an exit into the subsistence sector, arguably, has become increasingly rare in many countries in recent decades as new property regimes allow for more secure, and often more consolidated ownership structures (Li, 2010; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Tsing, 2005). Still, policy makers often hold up a return to rural areas and agricultural production as a solution rapid urbanization, the proliferation of informal settlements and informal livelihoods—especially in periods of crisis level urban unemployment (Li, 2010; Chan, 2010).⁵⁶

Challenging Marxian analyses that see people pushed off their land as available for exploitation by capital, Tania Li (2010) draws our attention to the reality that quite often there is actually no demand for the labor of those so dispossessed. In her 2010 article *To make live and let die*, Li describes the reality of dispossession: "...a stealthy violence that consigns large numbers of people to lead short and limited lives" (Li, 2010, p. 67). While there may exist various institutional supports for the poor, she argues that most often these now "require the poor to supply their own employment as entrepreneurs" (Li, 2010). This analysis is broadly consistent with the post-colonial post-Fordist modes of labor and production outlined above. Though I am sympathetic to Li's analysis, her argument rests on a set of conditions in which a 'return' to subsistence or petty agricultural production is not an available option, whether because of lack of land, new organizations of agriculture, lack of agricultural knowledge, the absence of desire for the uncertain existence of farming, or most likely some combination of these.

And while it is certain that many people making marginal livings off of subsistence world-wide express a "desire to leave behind the insecurities of subsistence production, and enjoy the fuller life that better food, housing, education and health care can offer" (Ferguson 2005; Rigg 2006 *as cited*

⁵⁶ In South Sudan, government officials have cited national food deficits as often as urban employment as a rationale for encouraging 'idle' people to return to rural areas to engage in agricultural production. In one example, the Eastern Equatoria State Legislature passed a law requiring all civil servants and political post holders to cultivate on Saturdays or face a pay dock. The same law prohibited the playing of cards, pool and other leisure activities during these designated workdays (Gurtong, 05/01/2012). And in another, statewide police commissioner of Northern Bahr al Ghazal state authorized press ganging "idle youth" to work on police run farms to combat food insecurity (Inter Press Service, 09/05/2012).

in Li, 2010, p. 87), for those in South Sudan at least, the precarity and effort involved in securing wage labor—be it working for the government or an NGO, or for one’s self—were hardly a way of obtaining these kinds of benefits. Indeed, as I will come back to later in the chapter, even the achievement of a salary was not, for most, sufficient reason to set aside subsistence production. Government delays in paying civil servant salaries could persist for months, political patrons could claim salaries before they reached workers, and names could be mysteriously struck from lists, resulting in no payment what-so-ever. Though the conditions with NGOs were somewhat better, employment there was characterized by short-term contracts, poorly paid and occasional “incentive” work, and subject to the cancellation of whole program areas due to the vagaries of donor funding objectives. And, the impact of uncertainty surrounding timing and levels of remuneration for waged work extended far beyond those that could claim a salary. Traders and petty commodity producers, too felt the squeeze as their primary customer base were salary earners who were among the few that had access to cash reserves to make purchases. By and large civil servants, NGO workers, traders and petty commodity producers all engaged in at least some form of agricultural activities to supplement their other earnings and to smooth out periods of uneven income. In this context, subsistence agricultural and pastoral production remained key livelihood strategies pursued by all but the wealthiest and most politically connected.

A desire for autonomy and the freedom from excessive dependence on external actors led to a re-valuation of subsistence modes of production in Chukudum. Those returning from Kakuma, in particular, tended to place a high value on engaging in subsistence production. Born out of returning refugee’s experiences of dependency on humanitarian aid and on the market in the camp, subsistence production offered a degree of protection against complete destitution, especially as access to food aid was curtailed. Additionally those who had spent the war up-mountain recognized that their self-reliance had provided limited security against the predation of soldiers and against

their isolation from broader markets. Yet the embrace of subsistence production did not mean a wholesale rejection of market-mediated exchange. Petty commodity production and petty trade were still very important, as was the market as locus of exchange. Most people in Chukudum sought to find an acceptable balance between the risk of dependency on nature, and the risk of dependency on the market.

In this chapter, I seek to highlight medley of practices that residents of Chukudum weave together in order to survive and prosper. Like Tsing, I hope to draw attention to the gaps, “where metropolitan projects do not reach so far or so deep as to change everything according to their plan” (Tsing, 2005, p. 195). Rather than spell out a story of the incorporation of a marginal place into an ever expanding global capitalism, I heed the call of Gibson-Graham (1996; 2006), who ask us as scholars to take seriously the various and persistent non-capitalist economic relations that so often remain invisible in studies of the economy. Subsistence production was both an economic necessity and a way to augment local insulation from a highly contingent political and economic context subject to extreme shocks. As a practice, subsistence production was also integral to the material and political project of wresting the power to allow settlement, control movement and determine access to resources away from an ethnically distinct, and well-connected commercial elite.

And, while I value recognizing practices that constitute an alternative to deepening commodity relations, it is perhaps too easy to read decisions around labor, production and subsistence as acts of resistance against a subordinate incorporation into capitalism, or against the commoditization of community property. As Rankin (2004) warns, as scholars we should resist the “tendency...to essentialize, romanticize and indeed imagine the lingering existence of autonomous ‘remote’, ‘non-capitalist’ cultures...” (Rankin, 2004, p. 71). In that spirit, it is critical to recognize the continued political and economic marginalization of Chukudum residents who struggled daily to feed their families and to stay safe in the face of ongoing violence. While subsistence production

provided a meager insurance against destitution, dry land farming in this part of Africa has its own considerable risks. South Sudan has been chronically food insecure for decades, and malnutrition rates consistently hover near or above emergency levels.⁵⁷ Pastoral production poses even more risks. It is just as vulnerable to climactic conditions such as drought as agriculture, but carries additional risks such as the very real possibility of animal theft and loss of life due to raiding. In 2009, the year I began my research, East Africa was hit with one of the worst droughts in years. In Eastern Equatoria, the first of two annual rainy seasons failed completely and the second was late and meager, and prices for grain rose dramatically. This put increasing pressure on communities across the state to generate cash for grain purchases, leading to a dramatic uptick in raiding activities (Interviews). I mention this context because it gives a sense of the incredible seriousness and urgency of town residents' decisions around how to balance subsistence production, trade and wage-earning labor. I do not exaggerate when I state that, for many, these are questions of life and death.

In what follows, I offer a complex reading about what is at stake for variously situated town residents in the consolidation of expressly Didinga authority over space in Chukudum. I do so by attending to the diverse mechanisms through which production, exchange and consumption were organized in Chukudum. In their decisions around how, for whom and under what conditions to labor, town residents were also having a conversation about the nature of value, its preservation and commensurability.

THE SALARY MEN: THE MAKING OF A POLITICAL CLASS

Let us return, now, to the passage that opened this chapter. Focusing in on the set of social interactions that accompanied our walk through the market, I wish to highlight is the ways in which value is created at the intersection of the economic and the social. James' walk through the market

⁵⁷ Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in 2012 reached 28.7 % nearly double the 15% or greater it is considered to be the critical emergency threshold (Action Contre la Faim, n.d.). Between 2008-2012 the population of food insecure people in South Sudan ranged between 36-53% (McElhinney, 2012) .

and the conversations that ensued were critical moments of the production of value for him. Though primarily social, these interactions also had broader implications for James's ability to retain his job as a low level administrative clerk at the county offices. As we walked through the market, James was not, in one sense, at work. Indeed, he had begged off work after the noon break in order to make a personal phone call. However, in another sense, James continued to engage in the social network maintenance practices that ensured his continued relevance and value to various socio-political sub-groups at highly politicized moment in local politics.

In focusing in on the everyday sets of social interactions—the conversations, greetings, detours and stops—that accompanied our movement through the market, I reframe the social as an important site of the production of value—indeed of work—for James and those with whom he speaks. Time spent discussing politics, passing on news in the street, or over beers, produced both friendships *and* a set of social connections and engagements that combine in ways that determine James's access to continued employment, and possibilities for future advancement. These micro-encounters are best understood as a particular form of labor—one which recognizes the material value of the social relations that this labor produces. That this labor occurs between friends, relatives, political collaborators and rivals in sites of public sociality—the streets, informal bars and so forth—blur the separation between life and work to the extent that they become difficult to distinguish.

James's situation is exemplary in this regard, as he was particularly adept at navigating the occasionally explosive social field of local politics in Chukudum. Neither the most intelligent nor the most qualified person to apply for the job with the county administration office, James's family connections doubtless played an important role in his hiring. Despite these shortcomings, or perhaps because of his recognition of them, James was quick to perceive the intertwined relations of patronage, favor and antagonism within county politics and government, and to learn how to engage

productively within this context. Gregarious, social and always ready to join in a discussion or a celebration, James was able to put people at ease. Alternately deferential and authoritative, candid and tactful, he was artful in his ability to maneuver around competing demands on the part of various patrons for personal and political loyalty.

During our trip through the market, then, the various social stops along the way home were important moments of value production for James. Through these discussions with elders and other young people he became an active participant in the public life of town. As one of several actors at the center of a political controversy, town residents actively sought to engage with him to suss out the degree of resentment engendered by the events and make assessments about what the fallout might be. His ability to joke about the false accusations against him also signaled his choice not proceed on a path of direct confrontation with the commissioner, a course of action which might provoke residents to take sides on the issue. Being *seen* to be able to take temporary disfavor with the political leadership in stride, and without excessive affront might, in the future, assist him in securing a position higher up in the county or state government hierarchy.

James's willingness to visibly perform a subordinate and accommodating posture was both calculated and deliberate. It contrast to the publically deferential stance taken by James, Loboaya a politically ambitious young teacher had very publicly confronted the county political elite by running as an independent candidate for a seat in the national parliament. As a well known, and well liked person about town, his campaign was threatening enough that he and several of his key supporters were arrested in the run up to polling. He lost the election, and nearly lost his post at the school as retribution for going outside of party channels and too publicly circumventing the wishes of powerful personalities.

In a small town where little goes unnoticed, the practice of politics depended on the manipulation of visibility and invisibility (Simone, 2004). As Simone notes, politics is made in the play between what is readily apparent and what goes on hidden from view:

...invisibility can act as a political construction—that is a means of both configuring and managing particular resources and the medium through which specific instantiations of the political are deployed.

(Simone, 2004, p. 66)

By joking about his predicament with the county commissioner, James allowed himself and those he spoke with to express a legitimate frustration with an unpopular leader in a flippant way that could be easily disavowed later should it prove necessary. James's ability to ride out the turbulent waters of local politics depended on knowing with whom opposition can and cannot be voiced.

In the later more private discussion with a friend over beer, James's criticism was more pointed. James was angry that he had been held in the prison for so long, when it was clear from the start that it was the Ugandan construction workers who had made away with the cash. He questioned why all of the people who worked in the office had to be punished. His friend cast doubts on the capacity of the new commissioner, who was known not to have finished primary school. The commissioner's outsider status—he came from the other ethnic group that shared the county—was of additional concern, especially since he appeared not to be interested in staying in Chukudum and performing the duties of his office—such as meeting with NGO representatives and visiting delegations from the state government. They complained that he hadn't organized a feast when the state governor visited a few weeks back (deciding to host it in his home village instead) and worried that the lack of formal reception for such an important visitor would reflect poorly on the community and jeopardize the level of resources allocated to the county by the state. The shop owner mentioned rumors that the commissioner is angling to have the headquarters moved to the other side of the county went so far as to suggest that he might even be involved in some way with the ambushes and insecurity on the road. The two took turns speculating on how long the

commissioner would last in the position, and on who would be fingered to replace him. For both, predicting who might be tapped as his replacement was an important piece of information that, if known a head of time, could be used to make themselves useful to the person, leading perhaps to a job or promotion.

That these discussions occurred over shared drinks is not immaterial. Discussions of local and national political developments most typically occurred while sharing alcohol (and occasionally food). For those earning salaries, this often meant financing the shared consumption of alcohol—most often in the form of imported beer.⁵⁸ On the occasion described above, it was James' friend who picked up the tab, perhaps to honor James's recent ordeal. But it was just as likely for James to be the one financing the drinks. On another occasion, I watched James repeatedly buy rounds for a group of 5 or 6 friends and acquaintances—at a cost of over 50 SDG, nearly a quarter of his monthly salary. This form of sociality was expected, if not required, of similarly situated salary earning young people. Clearly, no one person was expected to always be the one to pick up the tab, but doing so was a sign of generosity, economic wellbeing and social standing. At these gatherings, it was usually the person highest up in the social hierarchy that was expected to bankroll an afternoon of socializing and political discussion. There were plenty of occasions, such as the afternoon in the market, when James was on the receiving end of this dynamic. Yet it was also critical for him to be able to reciprocate on occasion. To refrain from engaging in this form of social drinking or to always accept the drinks purchased by others would result in a loss of standing within the group. The gossip session over a round of imported beer was an important moment of value creation for both men, and as such it constitutes a particular form of labor that is as critical to their livelihoods as the selling of goods or the typing up of a county notice.

⁵⁸ Drinking traditional homebrewed alcohols such as *merti ci yori*, or *mokoyo* at these gatherings was less common.



Chukudum Politerati
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

If, following Marx, we understand value as a product of labor, then it is clear that James' everyday engagements in the social sphere should be considered a certain kind of laboring practice:

For in the first place, however varied the useful kinds of labour, or productive activities, it is a physiological fact that they are functions of the human organism, and that each such function, whatever may be its nature or form, is essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerves, and sense organs.”

(Marx, 1990, p. 163-4)

Bourdieu's writing on class distinction is productive here. He argues for an attention to the body and to taste as sites of the production of class (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173-175). The preference among the politically ambitious “working class” for imported beer, in particular, was remarked upon surprisingly often by other town residents who found it mystifying and who professed a strong

preference for traditional grain beer. As Bourdieu notes, taste operates in such a way as to appropriate both materially and symbolically particular sets of objects and practices, inscribing them with classed meaning:

It [taste] continuously transforms necessities into strategies, constraints into preferences, and, without any mechanical determination, it generates the set of 'choices' constituting lifestyles, which derive their meaning, i.e. their value, from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations."

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 175)

The practices of socialization amongst the group of ambitious and politically engaged young people to which James belonged, as well as between them and the existing political hierarchy or the public more generally were just these kinds of classifying practices.

However, it is worth emphasizing that this kind of "work" was just as often also very practical in nature. Given the limited resources of both government and NGO programming in the county, much of the practical work of governing and ensuring basic service provision relied on informal collaboration on the ground. The informal social gatherings to share beer and gossip were also often the venues in which information was exchanged between different county departments and NGO programs about the everyday operations that impacted government programs.

For example, while sharing a meal with a friend, a county health worker hears that the driver for the NGO needs to make a trip to a distant village. Seeking him out, he manages to arrange for a ride to a clinic in another village along the route so that he can deliver needed medicines and take stock of the dispensary's supply levels. On this way back to the office, he crosses paths with an employee of the education office, who remembers that a few of the rural teachers stationed in those villages are due to come to town for a training program. This prompts the education officer to bicycle over to the driver's compound to see if the vehicle might have space to pick up the teachers on the return trip. At the same time, he also asks that the driver carry a sack of grain and a steel plow to his in-laws who live in one of the distant villages. All of this is in contravention of the NGO's

official policy of ridesharing, but is common practice since the county lacks a vehicle that can manage trips on the very poor road. It is through this and similar acts of ad-hoc collaboration that most of the work of the under-resourced county government is achieved.

In this section, I have highlighted the importance of male social network maintenance practices in the constitution of an emerging political class in Chukudum, while at the same time drawing attention to the considerable precarity that characterized government work. The propensity of high ranking county officials to arbitrarily dismiss civil servants that displeased them meant that it was critical for lower ranking civil servants to engage in these practices if they hoped to maintain the trust and favor that would allow them to keep their jobs. The cost of doing so, in terms of time, energy and money was significant. As the discussion of my walk through the market with James shows, county level civil servants and other salary workers in Chukudum relied on and invested in social network maintenance practices in ways that blur the distinction between work and not-work.

INCENTIVE WORK: COUNTING ON CONTINGENCY

I turn now to the practice of incentive work, which has increasingly come to dominate positions available to local people to work with humanitarian and development projects sponsored by NGOs. The emergence of the ‘incentive’ constitutes a discursive shift in the way in which labor is recognized and compensated, one that allows greater flexibility on the part of the organizations that make use of the practice in extracting labor from beneficiary communities. As such, the growing preponderance of incentive work points to another site of reworking of the relationship between everyday life and work.

It can be tempting to explain shifts in the nature of work in a marginal place—such as Chukudum—within a frame of reference that is primarily local or national in scope. This would be a mistake, as even the most remote areas of one of the least developed countries in the world are deeply connected to political and economic transformations occurring at the global scale. The

dominance of the humanitarian industry in the provision of basic public services is just one of the ways in which life in Chukudum is imbricated in the broader global political economy. In the past two decades, new forms of humanitarian practice have emerged in concert with the retreat of the state from all but the most basic social service provision under neoliberalism. As policies of fiscal austerity have gained traction among policy makers world wide, governments have been let off the hook for providing health services, schooling and so forth. In post-conflict contexts, global humanitarian agencies have taken up these responsibilities at the same time that global philanthropy has increasingly required new levels of accountability that document efficient and effective delivery of measurable ‘outputs.’

One result of this emphasis of effective management and efficiency in humanitarian aid provision has been the normalization of participatory models of assistance and development, which I argue, often involve significant claims on the labor of recipients. Rather than provide aid freely, increasingly humanitarian organizations require that recipients earn their aid.⁵⁹ This can take a variety of forms including food-for-work schemes, participatory development programs, a reliance on voluntary labor, and the use of ‘incentive’ work in many areas of programing. Food-for-work schemes, where recipients labor in exchange for food, offer perhaps the most readily apparent labor claim. The co-valuation of commodity and labor here are explicit, though depending on the particulars of the program the rate of exchange can favor the recipient of the food aid or the organization.⁶⁰ Participatory development models, which require community contributions to ensure ‘buy-in,” on the other hand, are not often recognized by agencies instituting such programs as constituting claims on labor. In these schemes, communities commit to giving labor away freely in

⁵⁹ This is not surprising given the trend toward shifts away from entitlement programs in donor countries, such as the United States, that towards assistance programs that conditioned receipt of aid on participation in workfare programs (McDowell, 2004; Peck, 2001).

⁶⁰ Food-for-work may subsidize consumption by providing much more food than the person could buy at local wage rates for the same work, or labor demands may exceed what is considered fair exchange.

order to attract desperately needed development projects and may have little control over the conditions of their labor. This model promises development on the cheap, requiring recipients to contribute building materials or labor without remuneration for infrastructure and other development projects.

Additionally, there are various schemes where organizations make use of recipient labor for activities ranging from day to day operations to more temporary mobilizations of labor for occasional distribution, monitoring and/or evaluation exercises. Rather than wages, workers on these kinds of short-term contracts are typically given an *incentive*—a fixed payment for community-member labor that may or may not reflect the time spent working on/for the project. As I will show, though incentive work varies in the way that it is organized depending on the type of work, the organizations involved, and often the source of funding for the project, it generally constitutes a claim to un- or undercompensated labor of incentive workers.

By far, incentive work as it was the most widespread practice of labor capture in Chukudum at the time of my research. Though there were only a limited number of humanitarian/development agencies and organizations with operations in the town, incentive work had become normalized through out South Sudan. One form of incentive work in Chukudum involved partnerships between humanitarian agencies and local government that seek to build social service capacity with an eye toward the eventual take over of administration and service provision by local civil servants. In these schemes, civil servants receive incentives for participating in ongoing training exercises, public health initiatives or for their willingness to work in remote ‘hardship’ locations. To understand the labor-claiming nature of incentive work, I turn to the story of Sofia, a midwife working in an NGO-supported government clinic in a remote area of the county.

Waiting for ADRA

I first met Sofia in February 2009, when I traveled a half day's walk 'up-mountain' on foot to the village of Naqichot in the heart of the productive plateau that makes up the central area of the Didinga Mountains. Because the mountains were so often talked about in Chukudum, it seemed important for me to go—even for a short visit—to see how it differed from town.

We arrived in the village in a soaking rain, chilled to the bone from the mountain air. My research assistant, Lokwar, directs us to the clinic, where we had planned for me to stay. Ducking under the corrugated zinc roof, I took a seat along side the 20 or so patients that were waiting to be seen, while Lokwar explained my presence to the one of the people working behind the desk. The clinic, though technically government run, was supported by the NGO where I had been living. I had cleared my stay with the program director, before leaving, but there was not way send a message ahead to advise them. At the mention of ADRA, a woman came out from the back room and surprised me by asking me in English

Sofia: Did you bring the vaccines?

Me: Vaccines? Uh, no. I am not working with ADRA; I am just staying there.

Sofia: What about the medicines? Anti-malarials?

Me: No. I...

Sofia: No? When will they be sending someone? Didn't Hector tell you?

Me: I... ah... I'm sorry. They don't share that information with me.

Sofia We have only a few vaccines left, and nearly all of the medicines are already gone. We will have to close if they do not come soon. They didn't give you any message?

Sofia is a slim but strong woman in her mid forties. At the moment she is frustrated and her brow is gathered in a frown. Her English is surprisingly good, letting me know that she must have gone to school for at least a few years, a rare thing for a woman her age. Sofia is a traditional birth assistant at the one of two primary health care units in the highland area of the county. Responsible for assisting with difficult births, she also provides basic pre- and post-natal check-ups and vaccinations, and assists at the clinic dispensary

Me: No, I really don't know. But I will be going back tomorrow or the day after, I will make sure to tell them. If you want to send a letter, I can give it to Hector, at least to let him know...

At this, Sofia's face breaks into a broad gap-toothed smile.

Sofia: We have advised them several times already. You know, we have not been paid for some months now. And still, we are working. Those of Loudo (another mountain other clinic), they have already closed, since a few weeks ago. They became tired of working though they are not paid. Now women are coming with their children all the way from there, just for the vaccines. We have very few doses left. Still, though we don't get paid, we will continue until the medicines get finished. What else can we do?

A few weeks later, I run into Sofia in Chukudum. We meet on a footpath as I am coming home from the Catholic mission. She calls to me, inviting me to take some local beer with her. At first I struggle to place where we had met before, but recognition dawns on me when I see the half blind dog—Simba—that follows her everywhere.

Me: So you have come? What are you doing here in Chukudum?

Sofia: Why should I stay up there when there are no medicines? What can we do? Only send people to the hospital here in Chukudum. We cannot help people. So why should I stay there? Better I come here and cultivate.

Sofia

Sofia was entitled to a small salary from the state government, and was also paid an incentive by the NGO that supported the clinic's vaccination program for her work as a traditional birth assistant in a remote mountain clinic. In addition to her work at the clinic, she was able to borrow a garden in the mountains where she grew grain, okra and other vegetables. She also maintained a garden dedicated to grain, sweet potatoes and cassava near Chukudum, which she tended during slack times at the clinic and with the help of her adult daughter who lived in town permanently. Sofia was dedicated to her work—staying at the clinic until it was useless for her to be there—but

she was also deeply frustrated. It pained her that she was unable to continue her work there due to lack of supplies, and that remuneration for her efforts was chronically delayed.

The underfunded state government lacked the capacity to ensure timely delivery of employee salaries and the supplies needed to operate 15 primary health care units (PHUs), 5 larger primary health care centers (PHCs) and the single hospital located in the county. Stepping in to fill the gap, three different NGOs provided supplies, training, employee vetting and in some cases additional monetary incentives for health workers, but the strain on health workers was apparent. Several of the PHUs had closed their doors, employees unwilling to work without pay. At the hospital in Chukudum, health workers were considering a strike until they received 6 months of delayed wages. Given the unreliability of government salary payments, health workers, teachers and other civil servants viewed the additional incentives paid by humanitarian organizations as a key part of their wages. However, in the eyes of NGO management, incentives are framed as supplementary payments in addition to government salaries. As such incentives are not viewed as compensation for labor, but rather as a support for 'beneficiaries,' despite the widespread recognition that government salaries are often delayed or diverted, often never reaching employees.

Even when humanitarian organizations recognize that their supplementary incentive programs constitute demands for uncompensated labor, restrictions placed on programs by funders may prevent them from addressing these concerns. The head of mission of one of NGO providing humanitarian and development assistance in South Sudan explained how a change in donor policy caused significant problems, affecting their ability to operate their programs:

We have been facing a lot of problems in some of our other clinics, because USAID has stipulated that we are not allowed to pay government employees. But the people staffing our clinics haven't received their salaries in months, and we can't even give them any incentives. It causes a lot of tension. It has affected the quality of their work. They are demanding that we give them incentives, to continue working.

(Interview, 01/20/ 2010)

In some cases, such as the one referred to above, even the payment of incentives is prohibited. At the same time, there is often an expectation on the part of funders, organizations and the government that programs will continue to operate even when workers are not being paid. Sofia's situation is exemplary in this regard. Both the government and the NGO supporting her positions at the clinic expected her to continue working, even when she had not been paid.

Several months after our first meeting, I ran into Sofia again in Chukudum. She was waiting to hear back about whether or not she would continue with her job. A month before, the responsibility for all of the PHUs had been officially transferred from the NGO to the government. Having been originally hired by the NGO, Sofia and all other affected health workers were required to re-apply for their jobs, this time through the government. Though Sofia had worked as a traditional birth assistant for over 10 years, she had had only minimal formal training and was worried that the job might go to a younger non-Didinga woman who had received midwifery training as a refugee in Uganda.

While waiting for the final interview short-list to be posted, she had decided to move with her youngest son (aged 14) to town, where he could finish primary school and she had secure access to land through her husband, though they no longer lived together. She had also invested her savings in setting up a small shop where her son could sell salt, biscuits, soap and other small items after school to supplement their income in case the job did not come through. Sofia's decisions to invest savings and labor both in subsistence production and petty trade suggest that, while she greatly valued the opportunity to work, even on an incentive basis, she recognized that relying exclusively on income from the government or NGOs might leave her without the ability to support herself and her youngest child.

However, the decision to prioritize subsistence production and alternative income generation strategies nearly cost Sofia her salaried midwife position. During the vetting process, I

spoke with the county health official, who, along with the head of the ADRA's community health program, was responsible for hiring decisions. When I asked about Sofia's chances he responded that though she had considerable experience and was respected among her patients, he implied that she was not fully committed to her work. He thought that she spent too much time away from the clinic attending to her gardens and cited her presence in Chukudum during the hiring process as one example of her lack of dedication to supporting women's health. When I reminded him that she was not currently under contract, he suggested that meeting critical community needs should be sufficient reward.

In all, ten weeks passed between the time when she went for interview and when she was informed that she would be rehired. However she was not able to immediately return to work at the clinic, since her new contract carried the condition that she attend a midwifery training course in the state capital. Though the course would be paid for by the organization she would not receive her salary or any further income support during the re-training process. This meant that Sofia would be without a salary for a total of six months, and that the PHU would be without a birth attendant for the duration of that time.

Though the six-month break in salary was in part due to the transfer of authority from the NGO to the state, such gaps in programming and delays in hiring were not uncommon. Short-term contracts and the ubiquity of annual project-based programs further exacerbate the contingency and uncertainty surrounding work with NGO projects. Given perpetual shifts in priorities of major funding bodies, even successful programs had no assurance that their funding would continue to be supported from year to year. Grant decisions are chronically delayed, and once a program is funded, there is typically a lag period where the program is re-worked in accordance with new rules aimed at ensuring accountability. Requirements for competitive hiring practices mean that existing workers constantly face the possibility of not being re-hired after a funding break. In those lag periods, a

number of organizations proceed on the assumption that funding will eventually come through so as not to waste resources shuttering and then re-opening programs. As a result, it is not uncommon for organizations to commission work with no clear idea of where the money will come from to pay for the labor. Even when they do not, the possibility of a grant coming through in a few months leaves incentive workers semi-committed to particular projects even when donor funding is not assured.⁶¹

Humanitarian and development organization increasingly use incentive work as a flexible way to mobilize labor in support of their projects. They are able to do so because of the conceptual fluidity that surrounds these incentive payments. In project descriptions, these payment are framed as a form of humanitarian support, rather than as payment for work. This facilitates two critical moves. The first is that by framing incentive payments as support rather than salaries, organizations can tap into different budget categories, shifting the ratio between administrative and programing costs.⁶² The second impact is that incentive work allows them to be more flexible in mobilizing labor, since these arrangements typically rely on short-term contracts or more informal, non-contractual work arrangements. However, while organizations represent these kinds of payments as beneficiary support to funders, the terms of reference and recruitment flyers that list qualification requirements and responsibilities make it clear these positions are often critical to organization programing and that incentives are offered as compensation for work. Critically, this double move

⁶¹ The situation of the cooks, cleaners and guards at the NGO compound where I stayed exemplifies this tendency. In mid-December 2009, all residential (non-local) staff left for their Christmas holidays, and the cooks, cleaners and guards were informed that the staff would return in January, with new contracts. However, only one of the programs had been renewed, and the organization was waiting on funding application to continue with the other major program. Still the cleaners and guards were expected to maintain the grounds in good condition during the staff's absence, though all of them were no longer under contract and were not being paid. When it became clear that half of the support staff would not be renewed because of the program cancellation, these staff members had even more incentive to work without pay, since it was not clear which of them would be dismissed and all wanted to appear serious about their work. When funding for the second program came through nearly six months later, several of these cooks and cleaners were not, in the end, renewed.

⁶² This ratio has become increasingly important in assessing organization efficacy and as such has the potential to impact funding levels and donor relations.

repositions those receiving incentives as beneficiaries of assistance rather than workers and shifts the field of what counts as labor.

The increasingly hegemonic position of ‘incentive’ work within the South Sudanese economy could also be seen in the ways in which this kind of partially compensated labor impacted a whole range of other kinds of work outside of the humanitarian sector. The staffing of Helecit Primary School and Chukudum Progressive Academy are a case in point. The two schools were constructed as a part of a broader spate of school building across South Sudan, funded by UNHCR, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund and a collection of diaspora led initiatives. The construction boom was undertaken by a number of NGO and their for-profit commercial partners, usually selected through competitive tender. On paper, the humanitarian community in Juba saw these kinds of infrastructure projects as a way to promote the transition from relief to recovery and development and as a key component in the provision of a peace dividend for the South Sudanese people. However, friends working in the humanitarian and development sectors in the capital jokingly referred to this focus on the comparatively quick infrastructure projects discussed above as the “roads, schools and boreholes mantra,” recognizing that in many instances, the building of schools was not followed up with efforts to ensure sustained funding for teacher training and salaries (Fieldnotes, Juba, 08/18/2011).

In several communities (e.g. Kapoeta South), the brand new schools stood empty or were used as storehouses for agricultural surpluses. In Chukudum, it is likely that the funders of the school building project envisioned that the existing primary and secondary schools would migrate to take advantage much-improved infrastructure when the new buildings were constructed. But this did not happen. Instead county officials chose to continue supporting the schools operating in the older deteriorating buildings, while allowing new schools to open in the newly built locations. These schools—Helecit Primary School and Chukudum Progressive Academy—have begun to operate, however without government support in the form of salaries and official recognition. The schools

rely completely on the contribution of student fees and volunteer labor on the part of teachers. Teachers at these schools do occasionally receive food assistance in the form of grain—also framed as an ‘incentive’ for their work—but this is conducted in an ad-hoc manner and is dependent on the discretion of the local chiefs and the county head of the South Sudan Relief and Reconstruction Committee (SSRRC).

The county education office encouraged the mainly returnee teachers to continue to volunteer their labor, hinting that there would be a possibility that these would turn into salaried positions in the future. For this reason, many of the volunteer teachers initially believed that they would eventually be added to the list of civil servants. To that end, they sought to better their skill set through participation in teacher training programs in the hope that this would facilitate their transition to salaried employment. However decisions over staffing were not part of the county government’s authority—this sort of decision is made at the state level. Over the course of my research in Chukudum, several of the volunteer teachers undertook expensive trips to the state capital to make their case for regular employment with the Ministry of Education. Despite the excellent performance of their students in national primary and secondary leaving exams the teachers found that the ministry had no intention of recognizing either their skills or their school.⁶³ In this way the teachers were force to choose between continuing to work without pay, or quitting and looking for other work.

Among humanitarian agencies and the substantial NGO sector, incentive has become increasingly hegemonic as a way to mobilize and compensate labor. In South Sudan, the significant economic and political power of these organizations to set standards and determine policies and promulgate norms lead to a proliferation of the incentive model of labor valuation in government

⁶³ In exam results from 2011, Chukudum Progressive Academy was ranked 12th in the country and hosted the county’s highest scoring student, while 3 of the top 5 scorers in the state on the primary leaving exams were students at Helecit (Wël, 2012).

programs as well. For those employed in this way, incentive work provided access to intermittent income earning opportunities and experience that might translate into permanent positions. At the same, this kind of work carried a certain level of social cachet, since hiring was often competitive and implied some recognition of competence and educational achievement.

Still, work of this sort was contingent enough that few felt secure enough to rely exclusively on it, especially given the high and highly variable prices of basic foodstuffs in Chukudum. It is not surprising then, that Sofia along with nearly all of the teachers I spoke with also relied heavily on their own subsistence production (and that of family members) to meet basic consumption needs.

DEBT, CREDIT AND MONEY IN THE MARKET

As I have shown, much of the work available in Chukudum is characterized by its contingency, regardless if it was supported by the government or an NGO. While those who managed earn salaries were comparatively better off than those that did not have similar avenues to earn an income, the uncertainty surrounding the timing and the level of remuneration for their labor produced its own set of challenges. For the ‘working class,’ contingency in compensation for their labor went hand and fist with the possibility and necessity of making purchases on credit. Informal debt relations, as a strategy to deal with contingent remuneration had effects that reached far beyond the affairs of the low-level civil servants and NGO workers to whom it was extended.

In this section I examine relations of debt and the ways in which these effect the circulation of money and goods in Chukudum. I do so because the particular organization of credit/debt relations has a much broader impact on decisions around labor and subsistence production than might at first be apparent. The purchase of goods on credit had the effect of tying up cash reserves in the payment of debts to Dinka traders. This was a constraint on the availability of money for purchases of locally produced goods, limiting the income generating potential of petty commodity producers and re-enforcing the importance of subsistence production in overall livelihood strategies.

Credit and the Circulation of Commodities

Expanding access to credit has, in recent decades, become one of mantras of the development industry. Embodied by Mohamed Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank and Nobel Laureate, the idea that extending access to credit will create poverty alleviation through micro-entrepreneurialism has gained widespread currency in development circles. On this view, credit is seen as a catalyst that can unlock the skills and ambitions of the very poor in ways that allow them to get themselves out of poverty. This view is based in new institutionalist economic analyses that posit 'market failures' in credit (as well as in land markets and so forth) as key factors in the failure to achieve economic growth in contexts of extreme poverty. In Chukudum, debt was not managed through the visibility producing micro-finance institutions at the center of what Roy (2010) has called millennial development, nor was it used to support entrepreneurial endeavors. Rather, the provision of credit was undertaken through informal and socially embedded personal relations at the local level.

As mentioned earlier, residents of Chukudum were quick to remark on their increasing reliance on money and exchange, suggesting that return migration set of a process of deepening commodity relation in town. Because there were very limited avenues for the infusion of money into the local economy, however, it is critical to examine the role of credit in the circulation of money and commodities in Chukudum. Marx places the commodity at the center of his analysis of capitalism. According to Marx, capitalist commodity relations are dependent on the continual reinjection of money into circuits of exchange. As he argues:

The process of circulation, therefore, unlike the direct exchange of products, does not disappear from view once the use-values have changed places and changed hands. The money does not vanish when it finally drops out of the series of metamorphoses undergone by the commodity. It always leaves behind a precipitate at a point in the arena of circulation vacated by the commodities...When one commodity replaces another, the money commodity always sticks to the hand of some third person. Circulation sweats money from every pore.

(Marx, 1990, p. 208)

In this passage, Marx points to the multiplying effect of the circulation of money. He implies that when the logic of commodity exchange takes hold, money as a crystallization of value is soon transformed into a perpetual motion machine, never ceasing to circulate. It is through the unceasing circulation of money that capitalist social relations begin to take form.

However, as Marx himself noted, in practice, there are a number of circumstances that can work to foment or limit this perpetual motion (Marx, 1990). Credit is often seen as one factor that can speed up the circulation of money, but depending on the way that it is organized, credit can also work against the expansion of circulation. From Marx, we also know that buying on credit is “essentially different from that intertwining of the series of metamorphoses” that characterize simple commodity circulation (Marx, 1990, p. 235). By introducing a time gap between payment and the exchange of goods, the two complimentary parts of an exchange—the transfer of a commodity from seller to buyer, and the transfer of money from buyer to seller—are set free from each other. This change, Marx argues, entails contradiction. Periodically debts must be collected, and accounts settled; when this occurs all at once, it has the potential to provoke a crisis in which money is locked up in the payment of debts (Marx, 1990, p. 235). Despite the tendency towards crisis, Marx goes on to argue that “the function of money as a means of payment undergoes expansion in proportion as the system of credit expands” (Marx, 1990, p. 238).

Under this reading, the extension of credit to salary earners in Chukudum should have had the effect of expanding the circulation of money and commodities. The extension of credit to salary earners certainly *did* allow those few who had access to money to purchase more commodities in the market. However, in Chukudum the overall effect of credit was *not* an increase in the circulation of money through the local economy. As I will show, the particular way in which debt and credit was organized produced a permanent crisis in circulation as payments of debt were displaced not only in time but also across space. This created a “short-circuit” in circulation where money entering into

the economy as salary payments was immediately captured by Dinka creditors and redirected to social status maintenance practices in distant home areas.

In following sections, I will explore the knock-on effects of this short-circuit in relation to choices around subsistence production and production for the market. But for now, I focus on how relations of debt worked to limit the circulation of money in Chukudum by reflecting on a morning a few days before Christmas, when various civil servants gathered at the county headquarters to collect their salaries.

Payday

The courtyard of the county headquarters is filled with perhaps 70 people, mostly men. They are clustered in circles, shaking hands, having short conversations, or sitting in the shade of buildings or of the mango trees that dot the yard. Some of these men come by to greet me, though there are only a few that I recognize.

I came here to find Anthony, my translator. A few minutes before I stopped by his house, only a couple hundred meters away. Not finding him there, his sister told me that he had gone to the county headquarters to try and collect his pay for his work as a ‘volunteer’ teacher. Hearing that I headed to the offices thinking I’d be able to find him right away. But with so many people crowded around, I don’t immediately catch a glimpse of him. I decide to wait a bit, figuring that I’d have a better chance of finding him if I stayed put.

Looking around, I see a group of women sitting on the stoop of one of the county offices and go to sit down near them. We exchange greetings. After a bit of small talk, we settle into silence and continue to wait.

In the crowd I see some of the people I have gotten to know in the few weeks since I arrived in town—Dada the driver, Andre the county health worker, and Edward, the teacher and county literacy promoter that I had traveled with from Juba to Chukudum. They are joined by others who, though I don’t recognize yet, I will come to know over the course of the next few months: the midwife Sofia, Samuel, the health inspector, Silvio the former commissioner, Victor a musician who earns his living as a teacher at the secondary school, Chol little brother to Akol one of the prominent Dinka shop owners,

Lochio a budding Didinga shop owner, Karina (James' wife) who cooks for the teachers at the primary school, and Mario, the paramount chief.

I approach Edward, and we exchange greetings and I ask him about his trip up mountain. Last time I saw him, he had been about to depart for a few days visit with his first wife who lives there permanently. As it turns out, he hadn't gone because of illness, but hoped he would be able to get there after Christmas. After these greetings, I ask why so many people are gathered at the offices:

- Me: Edward, what is going on here today?
 E: They are sweetening things for the teachers.
 Me: Are all of these people here to be paid?
 E: Yes, yes.

From the number of people crowding in front of the door to the county education office, teachers from all over the county must have come to collect their salaries. A group of young men strain to examine the list of names that had been pasted on the announcement board to the left of the door. Thinking back to a conversation from a few days back, I recall that Victor mentioned to me that the teachers hadn't received their salaries for several months?

At this point in the conversation we are interrupted. A man with a pronounced limp, wearing an SPLA hat introduces himself as a chief and invites me to his home in a mixture of English, Arabic and Didinga that I find difficult to grasp. Edward, for his part, is soon off greeting others. After begging leave of the chief, I seek the shade of the newly constructed county building. Finding room on the stoop I sit down next to Lochio, a young man I have not met previously.

- Me: Are all these people here really teachers?
 Lochio: No. There is one line for teachers. The other line is for the chiefs.

This makes sense to me. It also explained that last conversation. Most of the teachers I had met so far were younger men, smartly dressed in slacks and button down shirts. They spoke English with an ease that suggested that they had been schooled in Kenya or Uganda. These made up only a fraction of the people gathered in front of the county offices. The others were by and large older, and held themselves with the bearing of people used to some level of deference and respect. Many have in their hands well oiled

staffs carved of beautiful banded wood decorated with brass colored rings repurposed from used machine gun casings.

Me: So are you also a teacher, then?

Lochio: Me? Ha, no. I am a businessman. I'm here to collect my debts. Many of these people are owing me money. I need to catch them before they disappear. Once they leave this place, you cannot be assured that they will pay. They will tell you that the money got finished, or that the amount they got was small. It is best to get them while they are still here so they can't dodge you.

Me: Ha, ha. Well, I wish you good luck today.

Shortly after this, Lochio excuses himself; he has seen one of his debtors emerge from the administration office. I watch him as he quickly crosses the courtyard in pursuit of a customer. I continue observing for sometime, then decide to leave. Scanning the crowds again one last time, there is still no sight of Anthony. When I catch up with him the next day he tells me with frustration that the incentive payments that he and his fellow teacher had been hoping to collect were not given to any of the volunteer teachers from his school.

As I have already documented, it is common for county and NGO workers to go for long periods of time without receiving salaries in Chukudum. Given the uncertainty surrounding salary payment, most *working class*⁶⁴ people are forced by circumstance to make purchases on credit during the long periods between payments for their labor. For traders also, there are advantages to providing credit. Offering credit to salary-earning customers smoothed out and extended the potential for profit making beyond the short periods immediately following the payment of salaries. Because the injection of new money into the local economy in Chukudum was limited to relatively few discrete occasions, credit, then, was a critical mechanism in ensuring profitability for traders and a way to spread out consumption through time for workers.

⁶⁴ In Chukudum, the term *working class* was used to refer to any person who had a job with a regular salary. This category did not include incentive workers and those that worked on temporary projects without long-term contracts.

Despite the potential advantages, there were few people in Chukudum able and willing to extend credit, even to those whose purchases could be set against a county salary. In order to offer goods on credit, traders had to be secure that they would be able to collect their debts, and have enough other business to ensure they wouldn't run into cash flow problems. Most Didinga traders in Chukudum were not capable of extending credit. Their shops were comparatively new ventures, set up since the end of open hostilities in the early 2000s, in some cases much more recently.⁶⁵ With the exception of a few shop owners that were well seasoned in business, many of the new entrants were still learning the intricacies of trading. Lacking relatives living in Kampala and Nairobi, they struggled to establish long-distance trading networks, often buying items closer to home and at higher prices than those who had more trading experience and better contacts. The new traders were often less well informed about the relative prices of goods in regional trade hubs, or how to arrange for reasonable transport rates. Most had to travel personally on purchasing trips instead of relying on relatives already living in those cities to arrange for bulk purchases. Additionally, because they were not as well established, new Didinga traders tended to have fewer cash reserves—needing to sell exiting stock before being able to re-invest in new merchandise. All these made extending credit difficult for the majority of Didinga traders.

In addition, Didinga traders conducting business in Chukudum were embedded in a nexus of obligations to immediately family, kin, and political patrons in ways that made the collection of debts more complicated than it was for their Dinka counterparts. Having to shoulder claims on goods from family and patrons, the extension of debt, unless under duress, was generally avoided. Didinga traders were particularly wary of the tendency of their customers to continually deferring settling their debts to some unstated future moment. As the vignette above suggests, extending credit was

⁶⁵ For example many aspiring entrepreneurs set up small shops directly following the re-grading of the road in 2009. The improvements in both transportation time and cost that accompanied the road project meant lower start up costs and opened up the possibility of trading to many more people.

not without some degree of risk. The collection of debts presented a significant challenge for the few Didinga shop owners—such as Lochio—who did choose to offer credit.

Lochio was a fairly typical Didinga trader belonging to the younger and still socially subordinate generation of men in their late 20s to early 30s. His business was well established, but Lochio still had difficulty collecting debts for goods purchased on credit. In a culture where social relations are organized in relation to hierarchically ordered age-sets, direct confrontation of an elder by a younger man goes against socially accepted norms of generational deference. This meant that it was particularly difficult for him and other young Didinga traders to challenge the customers to whom they had extended credit, especially if the customer asserted that he lacked the money to pay. For this reason Lochio sought to collect his debts on payday, as his customers would not be able to equivocate about their financial situation when they had their salary in hand. Still, Lochio did not relish the prospect of having to chase down customers to get what was owed to him. It was clear from the signs hung up in a number of shops requiring payment in cash only that the hassle of collecting debts made many other Didinga shop owners reluctant to offer credit.

In comparison, Dinka shop owners were in a better position to sell goods on credit.⁶⁶ Though Didinga make up the majority of traders and shop owners in the town, the legacy of soldier-trader control over commerce that emerged during the war is still very much present in Chukudum.

⁶⁶ In his book *The Philosophy of Money*, Simmel (1990) identifies the critical role played in the development of trade by people considered strangers, for a number of interconnected reasons. As Simmel writes (with reference to the role played by Jewish financiers in Europe):

Dispersed people, crowded into more or less closed cultural circles, can hardly put down roots or find a free position in production. They are therefore dependent on intermediate trade which is much more elastic than primary production, since the sphere of trade can be expanded almost limitlessly by merely formal combinations...

(Simmel, 1990 p.224)

Money, he argues is objectifying; it evacuates the personal elements from exchange through its universality. In this respect the possession of money allows 'strangers' to avail themselves of opportunities that would be limited to members of the dominant community only by virtue of their personal relationships (Simmel, 1990). As I have shown, for Didinga traders, the claims made upon them by virtue of such personal relationships were considerable enough to prohibit them from extending credit. But Dinka traders were comparatively free of such social claims on their resources by residents of Chukudum. At the same time, Dinka people living in Chukudum were largely barred from productive work on the land by virtue of their stranger status. All of these factors contributed to their investment in trading and their willingness to extend credit.

Dinka traders with connections to the military still played a dominant (if much reduced) role in economic life of the town. They tended to have more experience, more capital, larger shops and a broader variety of goods. Dinka shop owners relied on well-established kin-based trading networks that extended from their home area in Jonglei, to larger urban centers in South Sudan and East Africa. Family living in the major commercial centers of East Africa—Kampala and Nairobi—provided reliable price information and allowed them to take better advantage of short-term price fluctuations to make bulk purchases. Some operated shops in multiple locations, which helped them to negotiate better prices based on bulk purchases (Fieldnotes, Chukudum). Prior connections with the military also allowed them greater flexibility in paying import taxes and navigating through road checkpoints. Given these advantages, Dinka traders were often able to undersell Didinga competitors to increase their business.

Because of their dominant position, Dinka shop owners were also more likely than their Didinga counterparts to offer credit—though, again, credit was extended only to those that were salaried employees. Similar to the interest free loans described by Rankin (2004, p. 111) in Nepal, credit with traders was based on social relations of trust and required no collateral. Mediated through personal relationships between lenders and debtors, the social nature of maintaining credit-worthiness meant that salary earners often purchased items at the same shops that offered them credit, even at times when money was on hand. For traders extending credit, the benefit of offering these kinds of short-term interest free loans was the possibility that doing so would allow them to capturing a greater portion of their debtor's overall purchases.

Short Circuits

Why does the near monopoly on credit by Dinka shop owners matter to a discussion of laboring practices in Chukudum? To explore the impact relations of debt between Dinka traders and civil servants on the broader circulation of money and goods through the economy, let us return

again to the passage recounting the afternoon I spent with James that opened this chapter. Given limited opportunities for waged work *and* the uncertainty surrounding the level and timing of remuneration, credit has an important role in the economy of Chukudum. But the domination of credit relations by Dinka traders in particular, had the additional effect of syphoning cash out of the local economy for investment elsewhere. Rather than increasing the pace of commodity circulation in town, and thus reinforcing the market as the hegemonic mode of exchange within the community, relations of debt actually limited the scope of market-based exchange for the majority of town residents, causing them to rely more heavily on subsistence production and non-market modes of exchange to meet their needs. The particular set of relations of debt in Chukudum worked to short-circuit a more systemic embedding of capitalist social relations within the community, as James' purchases in the market illustrate.

As a low level county worker with a modest salary, James was one of only a small portion of the population in Chukudum that was able to forge a credit relationship with a particular shop owner. For James, purchasing goods on credit allows him to smooth out consumption in the dry periods when his salary has been delayed for whatever reason. The relationship he shares with the shop owner is relaxed and friendly. Numerous social visits and periodic small purchases help him to maintain the credit-debtor relation, even despite their difference.⁶⁷ For James, as well as for other civil servants, it is common to expend the majority if not the entirety of the value of his salary each month through purchases on credit with Dinka shop owners and traders.

In contrast, Dinka traders purchase very few goods in Chukudum, typically limited to tobacco for export to other areas of South Sudan, or firewood and meat for domestic consumption.

⁶⁷ More generally the friendly dealings between traders and civil servants based on the offering of credit help to lubricate relationships between the two communities, moderating the potential for small disputes to metamorphosis into broader ethnically charged conflict. The collaboration between county civil servants and Dinka traders based on relations of debt also ensures some level of political voice for the traders that otherwise stay out of public political life.

This significantly limits the amount of money that is put back into circulation in the local economy. The bulk of profits are instead reinvested in the purchase of goods and transport, or sunk into the building of herds in the traders' home areas. Cattle, and to some extent tobacco, are goods that contribute to social capital in Dinka society. Both enter into bride price negotiations and are particular crystallizations of wealth that bestow social standing on their owner in excess of their economic value. Accrued not merely for personal access to marriage and social reproduction, traders are also called upon to expended on behalf of the marriage negotiations of broad set of relatives. The ability of traders to facilely provide cattle on these occasions augments social standing among their kin as well as in the broader community (F. Deng, 1984; L. Deng, 2010; Hutchinson, 1996).

Value, in this instance, is culturally contingent but—more critically for my analysis—it is produced in relation to another place. The redirection of profits for investment in other locations is not unique. Geographer David Harvey (2005) has long argued that a defining feature of capitalist modes of production is a tendency for the reproduction of uneven geographical development. In this way “[s]urplus capital in one place can find employment somewhere else where profitable opportunities have not yet been exhausted” (Harvey, 2005, p. 94). However, rather than employing profits exclusively as capital, Dinka traders living in Chukudum invested in a set of symbolic investment in their home areas (Bourdieu, 1984).

Relations of debt in Chukudum created a short circuit, where money introduced into the local economy is immediately tied up in the payment of debts. This kind of debt relation—by itself—would not necessarily produce a breakdown in circulation. It is the fact that those that extend debt make investments in other places that leads to the withering of the cycle of money and commodity circulation. The displacement of investments into the bolstering of social standing and prestige *elsewhere* siphons money and other forms of wealth out of the economy in Chukudum, closing down the multiplying effects of circulation. While debt relations are often seen as

contributing to the increase of the velocity of circulation, in Chukudum, the extension of credit did *not* work to extend or expand the circulation of money within the community. On the contrary, the provision of credit primarily by Dinka traders put the brakes on circulation by taking money out of local circuits of exchange.

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I showed how commodity production emerged as an important tactic in the struggle for survival in Kakuma refugee camp. I now return to examine the extent to which these practices moved with migrants as they returned to Chukudum. It was clear from many of the people that I spoke with, that more than ever before, life in Chukudum required money. This was as commonly reported by those that stayed in South Sudan throughout the conflict as it was by those who had lived in the camp. The lack of money available to make necessary purchases was a complaint I heard from all quarters. The overwhelming assessment by town residents, then, was that life was increasing mediated through money.

Complaints about the cost of living are perhaps unsurprising, and alone can't be taken as an indication that return migration was the *cause* of an increasing commoditization of everyday life in Chukudum. However there were several indications that the two processes were in fact linked. It is clear even from the limited historical data available that Didinga have long engaged in various forms of trade. During the colonial period for example they were known to act as an intermediary in long-distance goat trading, and the quality of the tobacco produced in the mountains has long been renowned for its quality in places as far away as Jonglei and parts of Northern Uganda and Kenya (Driberg, 1927; Quiggin, 1949). But town residents told me that things that were never before offered for sale were now available for purchase in the market—items like firewood and local wild greens, both goods that are freely available to anyone willing to expend the labor to collect them. In addition, new kinds of prepared foods of Kenyan origin were introduced—such as mandazi, a fried

bread originating on the Swahili Coast, and githeri, a mix of beans and whole dried maize cooked together in a stew that hails from Kenya's Central Province—offered for sale near the elementary schools and in the main market. Many reported that even traditional Didinga products—such as the grain based beer *merti ci yori*—were not previously produced for sale, but instead offered only as hospitality, to mark celebrations, or in exchange for community labor. Locally produced beer and alcohol still served these functions, but as I will show, women increasingly relied on selling alcohol as a way to generate a small income. Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, it was more common for producers of these commodities to cite prices in Kenyan Shillings (KSh) than in Sudanese Pounds (SDG), suggesting that for many, assessments of value were related back to life in Kenya. Interestingly, this was common even among those that had never lived in Kenya.⁶⁸

Given the consensus of town residents about their increased reliance on money in everyday life, the story that I expected to recount in my research was one of deepening commoditization and engagement with the market. For many residents of Chukudum, petty commodity production was the only means (other than selling livestock) by which they were able to gain access to money for critical expenses such as school fees, medical treatment, soap, salt and cooking oil.⁶⁹ Yet very few town residents reported that they relied exclusively or even primarily on petty commodity production for their survival. As I spent more time in the community, it became clear that while many individuals and families engaged in petty commodity production to varying extents, this engagement was often viewed as supplemental in nature rather than as the primary mode of securing

⁶⁸ Additionally, there was no Sudanese coin money circulating in Chukudum, making the one pound note (US\$ 0.35) the smallest denomination available. This caused difficulties when people wanted to make only small purchases, such as a single mandazi, needle, banana or matchbook. In these instances Kenyan and Ugandan currency was used to make change, at an informally institutionalized rate of equivalency. But while coinage was the only Kenyan currency to circulate within the community, even larger sums (such as the profits made from brewing or trading) were also commonly discussed in KSh. On numerous occasions when trying to make purchase in the market, I had traders and more informal hawkers first cite the price in KSh, then only after quickly performing a calculation in their head would they tell me the price in SDG.

⁶⁹ According to my livelihood survey, soap salt and oil were the most commonly purchased items in Chukudum, even among the poorest. There were no locally available or self-produced alternatives to these necessities that could therefore only be accessed through purchase in the market.

a livelihood.

In the previous section, I explored how relations of debt syphoned money out of the economy, suggesting that this had a detrimental impact on local production for the market. In this section, I examine practices of petty commodity production and exchange to explore how limited circulation engendered through debt relations worked against an exclusive reliance on this livelihood strategy among town residents. I turn now to recount one of many days spent with Karina, a member of the family that hosted me for a portion of my research, and the wife of James, the county clerk discussed earlier. Karina produced and sold Mokoyo, a mildly alcoholic spirit distilled from sorghum and maize, on a regular basis as a way to generate money for school fees, medicine, as well as to purchase meat, cooking oil, spices and other supplemental food for he family.

Making Mokoyo

Like most days in Chukudum, the compound slowly stirs to movement at first light. The kids are up, and their mother Karina is stoking a small fire to warm up what is left from last night's dinner to feed them. Nahidici and Lodai are busy with their morning chores, sweeping the compound and checking in on their grandmother who is ill.

Mokoyo mornings, however, are busier. Karina leaves her eldest daughter in charge of the younger children—she is still too young to haul much water. But every other able-bodied woman and girl is enlisted in the efforts to carry water. During the dry season, we head to the borehole about half a kilometer away. But it has rained recently, so the task is lightened somewhat. We can use the water collected off the roof of the one house with a corrugated zinc roof. The longer walks from the borehole are saved, but the water still must be moved to where the brewing and distilling takes place. Water is scooped out of the lone 200L barrel into every available container—20L jerry cans for the adults to carry, 10 L for the older girls and 5L and 1L bottles for the children—and transported across the compound and emptied into temporary containers. Once the barrel is empty, Nahidici handily lifts it to her head and walks it over to the brewing place, where she puts it down under the dense leaf cover of a Mango tree and begins to refill it. Additional runs to the borehole supplement the rainwater. Plenty of cold water will be needed throughout the distilling process.

When most of the water has been brought, Karina begins to mix the fermenting grain wort with a meter and a half long 'longarak' – an extra large version of the wooden utensil used for mingling ahat, the staple food made of maize flour. The drum she stirs contains water and a mixture of maize and sorghum flours, which Karina and members of the household have previously processed to prepare them for fermentation. That involves a series of steps that include soaking, sprouting, sun drying, grinding, re-soaking, fermentation and re-drying before being combined with water for the last stage. The grain and water has been mixed and left to sit, covered, for several days as the final fermentation takes place. As she mixes, Karina carefully pulls up the sediments of grain that have settled to the bottom during the fermentation, her arms immersed in the thick, milky brew almost to the shoulder. The agitation produces a coffee colored froth that soon covers the surface of the liquid.



Karina mixing the mokoyo wort for fermentation
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

Meanwhile, Karina's 16 year old niece, Nahidici, is busy making the fire, arranging three large stones under the still, taking care that the stones will provide a stable base once the weight of the beer is poured into it. She then breaks long bamboo poles into manageable sizes and places them under the still. Collecting coals from a neighbor's fire, she fans them until the damp bamboo catches alight. While bamboo is often more expensive than

firewood, it burns hotter and also quicker, and is less likely to smolder out if left unattended. Besides, it can be broken easily with a good stomp, saving her the work of chopping the hard tropical wood. Nahidici is not supposed to use the bamboo poles bought last season for an uncompleted construction project, but her grandmother isn't watching this morning and using the bamboo may free up enough time that she can still get to school on time.

With the fire lit and the still in place, the two—Karina and Nahidici—begin to fill the bottom chamber, using large gourds and mid-sized pots to transfer the fermented wort. Once it is filled, they finish the job of assembling other parts of the distilling mechanism. A large pot with holes in the bottom is placed directly above the reservoir. Long strips of old cloth and mosquito nets are wound around the joint to make a seal. A large gourd is placed inside the colander/pot, to catch the distilled alcohol. Finally another pot of the same size is placed on top of it all, again the joint sealed with cloth. Nahidici finishes the process by pouring cold water from the reserves into the topmost pot. This provides the cool surface which will provoke the alcohol condensation. By this time, it is too late for Nahidici to go to school. Besides, Karina has made it clear that she needs Nahidici to remain at home to help throughout the process.

When the water becomes warm to the touch, Karina scoops it out and replaces it with fresh cold water. From experience, Karina knows just how many times (four) the water must be replaced before the gourd becomes full of the mildly alcoholic Mokoyo. Later in the morning, Karina's sister in stops by with her younger children, the oldest can help carry water. At the very least, they will keep Karina's kids occupied while she works.

Already some neighbors have begun to show up, wondering when the first batch will be ready and cool enough to drink. Nacciada offers to bring some water (though it is clearly not necessary) and Lokai sets to chopping wood for the fire—both in hopes of getting a complimentary bottle of Mokoyo in return. Others stop by to chat, gossip, or enjoy the treat of using the heated wastewater to bathe with or to wash bedding. When Mokoyo is being made, the compound becomes a neighborhood gathering place.

By the afternoon, the compound is dotted with several groups of people talking and drinking. In one corner are a couple of benches where men are gathered, and some meters away women sit on mats under the shade of the mango trees. Another mixed group of close friends sit together inside Karina's house, on the other side of the fence. Customers are comprised predominantly of neighbors and distant kin, with the addition of the occasional soldier, policeman or passers-by. One of the older men motions to Karina, asking for another round to be brought. Karina fills the bottle and sends her son over to

deliver it and collect the money.

A large plastic sheet lays in the sunny center of the compound, covered with a layer of sprouted grain spread out to dry in preparation for the next batch of brew. Eying the drying grain, chickens wander in and are dispersed through collective vigilance with a long switch or a flying sandal. As clouds gather over the mountain, Namana—the matriarch of the household—begins to sweep the grains into a pile. When she is finished, she calls over her granddaughter Atee to hold open the flour sac as she scoops in the dried sprouts for storage. Just as this has been completed, the sky opens up and the first big drops of rain begin to fall. The neighbors and customer head for the kitchen, a semi-outdoors area covered by a roof. Under the Mango tree, the plastic sheet just used for grain drying is hastily strung up over the still to keep the fire from smoldering out in the drenching rain.

As darkness falls, neighbors slowly begin to disperse, women usually first, off to cook something for their children, and later the men. Some arrive late, on their way from town to distant villages. Knowing they won't make it before dark they opt to stay and drink into the night, continuing their journey in the morning. They rely on the hospitality of the family patriarch, who, as a chief, is generally obliged to provide it.

Tracing Commodity Circuits

Petty commodity production takes several forms in Chukudum, and included practices as diverse as collecting firewood and other environmental resources for eventual sale, beekeeping, making prepared foods, and brewing and distilling alcohol. I center the discussion of practices of commodity production in Chukudum on petty alcohol production for several, interconnected reasons. Alcohol production was also by far the most common income generating practice undertaken by women in town (Livelihood & Income Generation Survey, Chukudum, 08/10). In many ways, the practices of alcohol production are typical of most commodity production practices that occur in town, though there are also important differences. There are several factors that mark out alcohol as a commodity in ways that are distinct from the other items produced locally and offered for sale.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the purchase of alcohol played a central role in the

maintenance of the social networks that constituted the political class, making brewing and distilling one of the few avenues to capture income away from the short-circuit engendered through credit relations with Dinka traders. It is, by far the most important commodity circuit through which such transfer occurs. It also represents a critical moment in which wealth is transferred from mainly male salary earners to women brewers and distillers, who have differing priorities in the ways that they spend their income. Both a local capture of an income stream and gendered transfer of wealth, alcohol production acted as an engine of circulation in Chukudum. Alcohol production must, then, be considered a special case. In many ways, it offers the best possible conditions for commodity relations to take root. The sharing of alcohol plays such a critical role in the political culture in Chukudum that producers are practically a guaranteed a market for their products.⁷⁰

We need only to consider the question of *who is buying*, to see that alcohol production has a central place in the Chukudum economy.⁷¹ By tracing the money in its circuits through the community, I found that money that enters the economy as salaries is most often spent on a) paying down debts and making additional purchases with (most often Dinka) traders who offer credit; b) the purchase of alcohol (imported and locally produced) to share with colleagues and subordinates to enhance social status and to strengthen important patronage relations and more occasionally c) investment in productive assets such as seeds, tools, plowing or goods for a small shop. Very little, if any, remains for incidental expenditures including meat, vegetables, lunch and other locally produced goods that would allow money to enter in to circulation in the Chukudum economy. Of

⁷⁰ However, these same values and cultural meanings create dueling pressures both for and against the commoditization of alcohol. The making and sharing of beer and alcohol also figures prominently in 'traditional' practices of labor exchange, which is one of the key practices that contributes to the persistence of subsistence modes of production in Chukudum, as I will show in the next section.

⁷¹ As Schroeder (1999) among others, recognized, in many parts of Africa, control over personal income is not shared between husbands and wives. Gendered differentials in spending are rooted in the set of expectations and cultural understandings of which parent is responsible for particular aspects of children's welfare. Thus it is productive to trace out the varying spending habits both within and between households to grasp fully the circulation of money through the economy, especially because women actively sought out and were successful in generating their own independent (if comparatively small) income streams.

the money from salaries that remains available for circulation in the community, that paid to petty alcohol producers is by far the greatest in value (Livelihood and Income Generation Survey).

However, the critical role of alcohol production in generating circulation is dependent on the spending decisions and purchasing habits of the women brewers and distillers. How, then, do brewers and distillers spend their money? Data from participant observation, interviews and the livelihood survey suggest that women brewers and distillers are more likely to spend their money on locally produced goods than their male counterparts. Their tendency to purchase locally produced goods provides a key bridging point that allows money from salaries to enter into circulation in the local economy. Distillers, in particular, need fuel-wood in order to make their product. Because of the social regulation of space that produced “the bush” as a place of danger for non-Didinga residents (as discussed in the Chapter 4), it is primarily Didinga residents of Chukudum who feel confident in venturing out into the bush to collect firewood. Additionally because women are considered responsible for providing day-to-day sustenance to their children, grandchildren and, often, young siblings as well in Didinga culture, they are more likely to spend money on meat, local vegetables or grain to supplement subsistence food reserves or to give money to schoolchildren so that they might buy lunch.

The critical role of alcohol production in circulation also points to important drawbacks of relying too heavily on commodity production for survival. While alcohol production is fairly lucrative—respondents reported earning between 20-60 SDG in profit per distillation/brewing cycle—other ventures had more limited income generating potential. By comparison the arduous and physically exhausting work of collecting and selling firewood might net merely 2-4 SDG per week, and that only if the person spent each day either in the bush collecting or in the market selling. The selling of prepared foods, too, could be risky; often the small return on investment disappeared unless all of the product managed to be sold.

There were times when even the reliability of earnings from alcohol production faltered, as when salaries were especially delayed, when the flavor of the alcohol was of a lesser quality than that of another producer, or when kin and family members consumed the profits in the form of complimentary drinks. A friend explained why she switched from making mokoyo, which can be kept for longer, to brewing beer, a more fungible product in this way:

I was making mokoyo before, but people complained to me, saying the taste was not so fine. So it could take a long time before it got finished. And then there was the problem of my brother. You know how he likes slow-motion (mokoyo). He would come with our cousin and their friends to drink freely, even my husband would be there. So how can I refuse them? Always they tell me that they will pay, but when the time comes they tell me the money is not there. So I decide to go for *merti ci yori* instead. I know that I make fine beer, and my brother and his friends, they prefer the mokoyo so I don't worry.

(Fieldnotes: 02/23/10)

For Tata the factors that shaped her choices around alcohol production for sale were both internal to the production process—e.g. her lack of skill in producing a high quality mokoyo—and to the social constraints placed on her by family that limited her ability to distribute her product in ways that would actually generate income.

While the question of the appropriation of surplus labor has long been a central question of Marxist critiques of capitalism, Gibson-Graham alert us to both the universality of surplus production across a variety of economies and the diverse mechanisms through which surplus labor is appropriated. As Gibson-Graham note:

In any society, some kind of surplus is produced and used to support the nonproducing members of the society, as well as to build the distinctive social and cultural institutions that create social meaning and social order. In most societies, "unpaid" or "unremunerated" surplus labor is appropriated (often in product or value form) by someone other than the producer...Many producers have no control over what happens to their surplus labor--it is appropriated by nonproducers who claim a right to the products on a variety of grounds.

(Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 66)

Alcohol production was one of the most lucrative income generating activities available to Chukudum residents, regardless of gender. Yet it was also distinctly vulnerable to the appropriative

demands of family members, neighbors more distant kin. In their calculations around profitability, women alcohol producers in Chukudum routinely discounted a portion of their net product for home or family production (Livelihood and Income Generation Survey, Chukudum, 08/2010). However, excessive demands on production by family members—particularly by brothers and husbands—could prompt brewers and distillers to abandon or shift production in order to limit these claims.

In my discussion women's practices of alcohol production, I have drawn attention to the considerable constraints that limit the ability of town residents to rely on petty commodity production as a way to ensure a steady sustained income sufficient to ensure even basic levels of substance. While alcohol and other forms of petty commodity production provide key avenues for income generation (especially for women), producers had to depend on the availability of expendable income within the community for their profits. The contingency that characterized work and remuneration civil servants and other salary earners produced knock-on effects that impacted the profitability of alcohol production and other forms of petty commodity production. The high level of fluctuation in customer's ability to pay, as well as women's difficulty in resisting kin-based claims on their product added another level of uncertainty to the process. Returning to the chapter's central focus, I explore what this uncertainty meant for the ways in which labor for commodity production was mobilized and valued.

Brewing Practices

The uncertainty surrounding the livelihood potential of commodity production significantly shaped the ways in which labor was allocated to these kinds of practices. Some of the most common commodities sold in town were produced in ways that took advantage of slack times in the day and agricultural season, or of labor that would not otherwise be dedicated to subsistence production. Most also rely heavily on family labor contributions, including that of young children, as was the

case with Karina's mokoyo business.

The day with Karina recounted above was one of many spent with her and her extended family. As a regular distiller, there was generally not a day that went by that did not entail some small amount of labor that contributed to her mokoyo business. The process used to prepare and ferment the grains used in the final wort involves a complex set of steps carried out over the course of 10-15 days, depending on weather and other factors. However, many of the tasks required little active work, followed by long periods of waiting—for the seeds to sprout, for them to dry, for fermentation to take place—that required little active attention. This meant that Karina was able to easily weave the labor of making mokoyo into her various other responsibilities, which included childcare, meal preparation, occasional work as a cook at the primary school, laundry, bringing water, tending of the family's gardens and trips to the market to purchase provisions and so forth.

Additionally, Karina was not the only person contributing her labor. Nearly every member of the household was involved in some minor way. When the sprouted grain or fermented flour was drying in the courtyard, all were expected to be vigilant against chicken encroachment and the occasional rain burst. Both her nephew and young brother-in-law were enlisted in keeping the compound clean and makeshift shaded seating areas in good condition, and could be called upon as needed to bring chairs out for more distinguished guests. Even neighbors and friends might pitch in to exchange heated water for cool water in the still, or to chop wood to feed the fire, expecting as much from Karina when it was their turn to distill. However, the most important labor that Karina counted on was that of the other women and girls living in the compound. Her mother-in-law, though frail due to illness, was particularly attentive to ensuring the drying grain materials remained uncontaminated. She could also provide advice and instruction to the young girls in the household on the proper techniques of processing the grains.

While much of the preparatory work could be done as time allowed, on distilling days, the reliance on girls' labor often meant holding one or more of the four school-aged girls home from class so that they could assist with hauling water, tending the fire and serving customers. While her own daughter and those of her father-in-law's second wife often delighted in missing school, for Karina's niece, Nahidichi, missing school was disappointing. At sixteen, she was both experienced and strong enough that she could be trusted to undertake much of the work without direction from her auntie. Though she never complained to Karina or her grandmother about remaining at home, she confided to me that she worried that she might fall behind in her studies (she was proud to be head girl and one of the top students in her class). Not surprisingly, she also missed the chance to socialize with her friends at school. When not at school, Nahidichi was subject to both the supervision and substantial labor demands of her grandmother, auntie and other elder members of her household. Though she never directly resisted these claims on her time and labor, she enjoyed the moments of escape from these demands afforded by school and church attendance.

Other types of commodity production were equally reliant on family labor. Typically, the lion's share of the labor for commodity production fell to girls. On several occasions I met with groups of pre-adolescent and adolescent girls heading out or returning from firewood collecting forays. While some of the wood was for domestic use, several also reported that they or their mothers intended to sell the wood. In addition there were several locations around town where girls sold prepared foods and garden produces out of plastic basins. Another common practice was for a mother (or older sister) to send a school aged children to class with prepared foods that they would store under their chair during lessons, and then sell during the two school breaks. This practice grew even more prominent when the school-feeding program supported by WFP was cut, as there were many hungry children that would readily part with 5 or 10KSh to purchase mandazi, githeri, or boiled cassava as a mid-day snack if they had some pocket money. Though not all students were able

to purchase lunch, the low prices—starting at 5KSh for a small scoop of beans or one mandazi—meant that children could be satisfied with a meal costing less than ½ SDG (\$0.18). This caused Jackson, a secondary student who was never given money to purchase lunch to complain to me “Those primaries—they are rich!” When I asked him to elaborate, Jackson explained that secondary students had only one short break during the day and for that reason were excluded from engaging in this moderately lucrative practice. Just as with alcohol production, the contribution of family labor was key in most petty commodity production practices in Chukudum.

However, the contingency of being able to earn income through commodity production meant that very few people in Chukudum relied exclusively on this mode of production for economic survival. Often, practices such as beer brewing or the selling of prepared foods was combined with major labor investments in subsistence production. This was so even for firewood vending. Though it required sellers to expend of extended periods of time gathering, it was most commonly engaged in during the dry season, when labor usually directed into agriculture is freed up. I have shown how labor invested in petty commodity production was most often organized so as to compliment households’ other labor commitments, in particular that directed towards subsistence agricultural production.

CENTERING SUBSISTENCE

Throughout this chapter I have pointed to the continued relevance of subsistence production in Chukudum. Given the precarity that characterized other possible ways of securing a livelihood, the paucity of salaried positions and the considerable amount of (often uncompensated) ‘work’ that had to be invested to maintain these income streams, it is no surprise that subsistence production was at the center of everyday practices for a majority of town residence. Significantly, this was true even for ‘working class’ salary earners (Livelihoods & Income Generation Survey, Chukudum, 08/2010). This despite the considerable degree of risk involved in dry land farming in

the area. Survival was often secured through blending together a medley of practices that could balance the risks of depending too much on external actors—including the government, humanitarian and development organizations, and traders—against those inherent in relying on highly variable local weather conditions, where a return on labor expended in subsistence production was also far from guaranteed.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that engaging in subsistence production offered a degree of autonomy in the face of considerable levels of economic insecurity. That a return to subsistence modes of agricultural and pastoral production was even possible in Chukudum (and South Sudan more generally) marks out the experiences of returnees in the area as uncommon when compared to many other places that have experienced high volume return migration in recent decades (e.g. Omata, 2011). In Chapter 5, I explored the ways in which returnees were able to secure access to productive land through ethnic and family based ties. This occurred largely without significant levels of legal wrangling, political negotiation or violent struggle because the process relied on commonly held understandings around autochthony, land rights and resource that crossed ethnic lines. When combined with the abundance of available productive land, these factors smoothed the way for subsistence production to re-emerge as a critical survival resource for most town residents, returnees included.

But some key questions remain. To what extent and in what ways does labor expended towards subsistence differ from other modes of work? And to what extent can or does subsistence production augment autonomy? Van de Ploeg (van der Ploeg, 2008) identifies subsistence modes of production primarily by the *logic of farming* through which production is organized, including—critically—a focus on the way in which labor is expended in the process. For Van der Ploeg:

The basic difference between the peasant and the entrepreneurial modes of farming resides in the degree of autonomy that is built into the resource base. Autonomy is also encountered in the relations in which this resource base is embedded, as well as in the way that it is operated, extended and further developed. This many-sided

autonomy is constructed along a number of dimensions...Some of these dimensions directly concern the way in which the *process of agricultural production is ordered*.

(van der Ploeg, 2008)

In this analysis, the end goals or motivations of a peasant farmer are dual. In the first instance, the goal is to maintain productivity through the reproduction of the farm. This means farming in ways that are attentive to the human and natural resources expended in farming, and ensuring that they are nurtured so that they can continue in the long term, rather than in ways that exclusively aim at securing surplus production that can be transformed into an income stream. This “... way of perceiving, calculating, planning and ordering the process of production” (van der Ploeg, 2008) is the critical factor that distinguishes peasant modes of production from other more entrepreneurial forms of smallholder agriculture (see Figure 3).

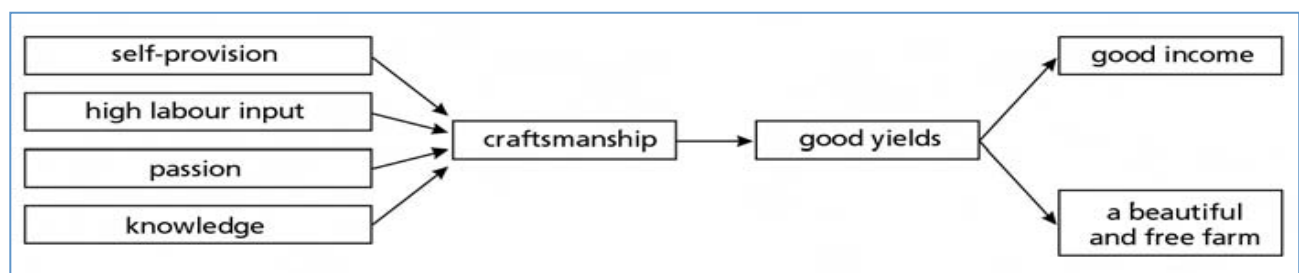


Figure 3: Characteristics of Subsistence Production (van der Ploeg, 2008)

Labor, in Van der Ploeg’s configuration, is a critical input but is organized according to a logic of “co-production” in which the humans and natural elements interact to produce substance in ways that do not over tax the environment (van der Ploeg, 2008). Rather than the production of commodities to be traded on the market, subsistence production aims at ensuring sustenance, most often at the scale of the family or household. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the logic of providing basic foodstuffs for family members meant that many families cultivated multiple gardens in separate locations to take advantage of locally variable weather patterns and soil conditions. This required family-level strategies to determine the when and where labor should be provided and by whom. Though labor dedicated to subsistence production is often applied flexibly within these

groupings, it is a flexibility predicated on augmenting household autonomy rather than on dependency on donors, funding priorities, budget lines, corrupt or ineffective politicians, and even husbands. And while returns on subsistence labor are always uncertain, subsistence production required much less capital investment and the odds were certainly more favorable than any of the other livelihood options.

In Chukudum, wresting control over the means of subsistence was at the heart of Didinga town residents' survival strategies, as discussed in the previous chapter. The ability of town residents to connect labor to land without the mediation of the market was a critical factor in supporting post-conflict recovery, however marginal. By organizing family labor around subsistence production and relying on 'traditional' forms of labor exchange, town residents were for the most part able to ensure at least a basic level of sustenance at the community scale. I turn now to examine the ways in which labor was mobilized towards subsistence production and discuss how these practices shaped everyday life in Chukudum. To do so, I recount a day spent weeding in Karina's garden one Saturday during the rainy season.

Weeding the Garden

Today we are going for weeding. For the past few days, Karina has been talking about the need to get the second weeding of her most productive garden finished, before the weeds completely overtake the shoulder high sorghum and maize plants. When I wake up, I find Karina already up, setting a big pot of beans on the fire to boil.

Before I even make my coffee, Lodai and Jackson move from house to house in the compound gathering up as many long and short headed hoes as they can find. Everyone seems busy as I wander over to Karina's house carrying her youngest child, Alice. A few other adolescents—mostly relatives, neighbors or school friends—join Lodai and Jackson, each with their own hoe. Together they head east, first to the compound of a cousin named Charles. Charles is expected to help out, since he shares food from Karina's pot and often sleeps in the room that Lodai and Jackson share. From there they

continue toward the mountain, soon disappearing behind the wall of vegetation that lines the narrow footpath.

At the compound, Karina checks the water level on the pot of beans, then gathers together five empty jerry cans. Counting me, Nahidici, Natiki—who is only ten years old, but very strong—and Karina, we need one more person. Calling over to the neighbors, Karina is able to enlist Nakiru, and then decides to bring along Natiki's twin sister as well, who can at least carry a 10L container. We head across the valley to the roundabout, hoping to find someone who is selling *merti ci yori*, a traditional thick white beer made from sorghum or maize under the giant tree that acts some times as market area.

Seeing us arrive with multiple containers the two women selling today begin to call to us, competing vehemently for our business. The young woman one on the right offers a sample to me, but I defer to Karina. I am still just developing a taste for this beer, and would not know how to judge the merits of each. Karina, Nahidici and Nakiru taste each of the beers on offer, choosing to buy from lady on the left.

One by one, the containers are filled to the brim, and it becomes clear that there isn't enough to fill the last container. A series of negotiations ensue, the beer is poured back into the vendor's drum and exact measurements are made. The remainder of the container is then filled with beer from the vendor on the right and when all is squared away, we lift the containers to our heads and begin the walk back to the compound. Walking agitates the beer, and soon a thick head of foam overflows from each of the containers, dripping down into our hair and clothing. Once at home, Karina tucks all but one of the containers of beer into her house. She stays home to look after the pot of beans. Nakiru returns home to bathe and feed her own children, but promises to come by later for a short while to help out.

The rest of us head out to Karina's garden to begin work. We find the guys busy, methodically moving across the field chatting all the while. We take up hoes and hand weeders as join in. As we are short a couple of hoes, we take turns, passing tools along when one person becomes tired or thirsty. Even Karina's young children attempt to help out, though they are too small to wield the hoes with an acceptable degree of accuracy. As the two boys work, both under 6 years old, Jackson supervises, making sure that they don't do too much damage to the crops. I think that his efforts would be better spent supervising me, as I find my own accuracy with the heavy hoe to be poor.

In the distance I notice another work party is weeding. Jackson tells me that the field belongs to Samuel, who works at the County Health Office. Peering in the distance, I am surprised to recognize Samuel's small frame as he lifts the hoe.

After perhaps 45 minutes, Karina arrives with a container of beer and a couple of gourds. In separate circles, the young men and the women sit for a rest, taking turns drinking from the gourds. Lokai and one of his friends, who turned up just before we rest pause to rest, look hopefully to Karina as she fills the gourds. But Karina is a good manager, parceling out only the appropriate amount of beer to keep people happy and working, but not enough for us to become drunk and unmotivated to work. She does not offer the latecomers any drink—that is reserved for after the work is provided. Our rest last perhaps 20 minutes, and then we return to weeding. This time Karina joins in for a while, sending her daughter back home with the empty container and instructions to keep an eye on the beans. With the arrival of additional people, the work seems to go much faster. Charles, an older man who has long been widowed and helps out around the compound, begins to sing a weeding song, and all join into to make the work go faster.

I tire quickly—uprooting far too many sorghum shoots, and falling behind the group. By this hour the sun is high in the sky and the heat of the day has begun to grow. I leave to get water and when I return, I find that Karina has left to bring more beer and lunch. When her daughter and Natiki arrive carrying platters of food on their heads, we all stop our work, arrange ourselves under the shade of a couple of nearby trees and tuck into lunch.

The afternoon continues on like the morning, long periods of work, interspersed with breaks of beer drinking and discussion. Aside from the family members, people come and go, as they choose. Some stay all day, while others help out for an hour or two. I give up my hoe to someone more adept at using it, and concentrate my efforts in the lighter work of gathering up the weeds in piles, along with Nacciada and Naiyit two older women, plus the girls of the compound.

As the sun sinks toward the western hills we make our way back to Karina's. We have managed to weed most of the field, the small corner that remains can be done easily enough with family labor in the coming days. Several of the work party gather around the last container of beer, chatting and drinking. Nacciada appeals to Karina for her to sweeten the deal with a little mokoyo, but she stands firm. She has already spent enough on the food and the beer that she's not willing to add another five or ten pounds out of her

mokoyo profits on top. Disappointed Lokai and the others finish up the beer and head on their way.

Mobilizing Family Labor

As with petty commodity production, labor for subsistence was organized at the household level and differentiated across gender and generation. Though land rights were passed through the male line, it was women who were substantively in charge of most of the key decisions about how to make use of the land for subsistence. This included what mix of crops to sow, when to clear, plant, weed and harvest, and how to mobilize labor at key moments in the agricultural cycle. To the extent possible, each adult female in a household was allocated land for cultivating grain and vegetables by the family patriarch. Produce from each woman's garden was hers to dispose of as she saw fit, and could not be claimed by another woman of the household. In some instances, men too had their own gardens, though they did not usually grow grain, instead sowing root crops (sweet potatoes and cassava) or pulses (beans, peanuts, sesame). The produce from these gardens was usually shared evenly among the women who maintained their own cooking hearths. Both boys and girls (up until they were married and dowry payments begun) were assigned progressively bigger plots and more responsibility to manage their personal gardens as they aged.⁷²

Aside from a few key moments in the agricultural cycle, much of the labor invested in gardening was such that it could be managed by recourse to household labor on a day-to-day basis. As with labor invested in petty commodity production, the labor demands of subsistence production could be largely be managed flexibly around other daily activities. A trip to the market, hospital, bore

⁷² Land was distributed according to gender and generational roles, as well as with regard to crop requirements. Women were generally responsible for vegetable and staple grain production, whereas pulses and root crops were the domain of men. Access to productive land was nominally at the discretion of the family patriarch, who had the power to allocate land within a fairly extended family. However there was some flexibility in to this arrangement. While typically a patriarch would be charged with distributing garden lands for grain production to each of his own wives, to the wives of his married sons, and to unmarried daughters and granddaughters, and sometimes married daughters; and assigning smaller plots for pulse and root crop production to sons and grandsons, often times these decisions were worked out in a more flexible manner between the various family members. For each garden or plot, family member recognized as the 'owner' was responsible organizing mobilizing the labor necessary for production.

hole, or to visit a friend might also serve to check on the pollination of sorghum flowers, or to decide on the timing of the next weeding party, as many of the closest gardens could be reached with only minor detours or were interspersed with households. The habit of planting a few vegetables in the margins of gardens dedicated primarily to grain production meant that the same trip might also yield a handful of okra and pumpkin greens.

Women could also rely on family labor for specific tasks. Often teenaged household members (of both genders) were assigned their own plots or specific duties for which they were responsible. For example, in weeks prior to the day described above the teenaged boys Lodai and Jackson were woken early each morning by Mario (the patriarch) to assist with the mounding and planting of sweet potato vines in the hours before they went to school. As the work was directed by Jackson's grandfather (Lodai's grandfather), the sweet potatoes produced would be split between the three distinct hearths that made up the compound/household. In addition to close relatives, women could call upon the labor of anyone that regularly ate from their cooking pot. For Jackson, the eldest son of Mario by his second wife, this meant that in addition to the work that he performed for his sister-in-law Karina, he was also expected to contribute labor to the fields cultivated by his sister and mother.

Nahidici had her own small grain garden directly adjacent to the compound, carved out of the area allocated to her sickly grandmother. Its proximity to allowed her to tend the garden without having to spend much time traveling to and from the garden, and so allowing her to continue to attend school. The garden was her unique responsibility, and unlike her brother Lodai, she was also allowed to make decisions about how to use the grain that the garden yielded. She told me that she hoped to get enough grain from her garden to make beer so that she could buy a new school uniform. Even Karina's eldest daughter at age eight had been given a small area next to her own house in which she was allowed plant seeds of her own choosing—she had chosen to plant

tomatoes, okra and a few kernels of maize. Nahidici was lucky that her family could claim land close to town. In those families that lacked access to land near town, it was common practice for girls and unmarried young women to be sent to stay with (maternal) relatives for a month or more to assist them with the cultivation season.

Collective Work

However, for each garden, there are three critical moments during the season where significant expenditure of labor power is required, one that often exceeds a household's reserve of available labor.⁷³ These bottlenecks in production were addressed through collective work parties such as the one described above. Collective work parties are a social technology that brings together close relatives, more distance kin, neighbors and friend in a set of intersecting reciprocal relations that make subsistence production possible. While not every family made use of these kinds of labor generating practices, a majority of Chukudum residents hosted or engaged in collective work, or did both (Livelihoods & Income Generation Survey, Chukudum, 08/2010).

Indeed, this was the only socially acceptable way to engage additional labor for assistance with productive work. Paying a wage for labor was not a common practice and often caused tension between workers and those asking for work to be completed, as the expectations around how work would be accomplished were not as clear. In contrast, the rules of hosting or participating in collective work were well known, and while there were some moments of negotiation between hosts and workers, the parameters were largely set.

⁷³ The first of these is during the initial clearing of the land, and others during two major weeding that take place at different stages of crop maturity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is common for women to cultivate more than one garden. Generally, these women were able to space out labor investments in each garden due to slight variations in seasonal rainfall across location. For example, the extended rainy season in the mountains meant that those gardens could be planted twice in a year. If a woman had a garden in the mountains and in the lowland, she might travel to the mountain in February for cleaning and planting, then return to the lowlands to clear there in March, leaving a relative to arrange for the weeding on the mountain plot. She might remain in the lowlands through the second weeding, then head to the mountains to harvest and replant, returning to the lowlands again for harvest. In this way, she could take advantage of three agricultural cycles on her two plots.

Returning to the weeding party described above, the general shape of the work party as a social practice of shared labor emerges. First, let us consider Karina's perspective. It is clear that there are several key aspects to hosting a successful work party, not least of these is ensuring that people show up to do the work. This involves fore planning so that information about the timing of the work can be distributed to those that might be interested in participating. In the days prior to the work-party, Karina made sure that members of her household, and various neighbors were aware of her intention to weed the garden on that Saturday. This ensured that all family members that could be called upon would be in attendance (and not off playing football, or working in the school garden for example). It was also important that none of her close neighbors or friends were planning to weed their garden the same day as that could draw people away from helping with her garden.

Additionally, Karina had to decide what food to offer and whether to brew her own beer or purchase beer in the market. In normal years, Karina reserved a portion of the previous year's harvest for this express purpose, but the drought the previous year had significantly reduced her yields, and the family had been surviving on purchased grain for some months. For that reason, Karina had chosen to buy the beer in the market, since she would have had to buy the grain for the beer regardless, and this way she did not have to take the time to prepare the beer herself. If she had decided to brew at home, she would have had to begin processing the grains over a week ahead of time.⁷⁴

Once the day of the work party arrived, Karina's juggled priorities as she had to prepared food for lunch, purchase and transport the beer used motivate her worker, ensure that the work began at a reasonable hour and continued through out the day. This last was perhaps the most difficult task, as the amount of beer offered at each rest should be enough to nourish and refresh the

⁷⁴ The processing of the grain up to the last stage before fermentation could also be done well ahead of time. The grain could then be dried and stored in a well sealed sack until the night before it was needed for use, when it was combined with warm water and then left to ferment for 10- 12hours.

workers so that they could continue to work (akin to a fermented porridge, the beer was nutritious as well as mildly intoxicating), but not enough to reach a level of intoxication that would detract from their ability to carefully weed the fields. Additionally, she had to guard against the one or two who tended to show up just before a rest break in the hopes of enjoying some free beer with out contributing to the work at hand. By judiciously giving out beer by shares, she was better able to control the pacing of work to ensure that as much of the field was weeded as possible given the number of people who turned up. However, decisions about how much time and at what level of intensity was left to the participants themselves, who could choose to stay for the duration of the work, or just for a few hours.

From the perspective of those joining in, collective work parties offered several benefits. Clearly, by joining in collective work, each person could make a claim on Karina for beer, and depending on several factor, also for a meal. For a few people I knew, the ability to engage in collective work and through their work make claims on the families of those marginally better off was a key strategy for their survival. Lokai was one of these. He was a restless young man, related in some distant way to the family, who would often join in any work that offered the potential for him to get a bit of free food or beer. The old man, Charles had a more formal arrangement worked out with Mario, the patriarch of the compound. Formerly Mario's personal bodyguard, he has neither wife nor daughter/daughter in law to cook for him or to tend his own gardens. To survive, he works for the family providing various forms of labor in exchange for meals and a place to sleep.

But the claims that emanate from this form of labor exchange extended further. They formed the basis of a set of broader reciprocal relationships among family members and neighbors. So while Karina's sister in law and several neighbors contributed to weeding her garden, it was expected that Karin would reciprocate with her own labor should they in turn need to mobilize labor any reason. Collective work parties were not only organized for gardening, but also for

constructing, thatching, or for plastering a new home and other major household projects. Thus work party participants could also call upon the labor of the host at critical moments of labor shortage in their own households. These expectations of mutual labor exchange were not articulated as such, nor would they be ‘called in’ at specific moments, instead they functioned as a set of mutual obligations towards each other that might be relied upon in moments of crisis.

CONCLUSION

When read against the extreme precarity that characterized waged-work in the broader South Sudanese economy, the ability to connect labor to land without the mediation of the market offered a critical means of ensuring sustenance. The revaluation of subsistence has taken place in a context where government and non-government employers have devalued labor through the use of ‘incentives’ and where there is a high degree of uncertainty surrounding remuneration for salaried work. Given the restricted avenues by which cash is infused into the local economy in Chukudum, the earning potential of commodity production and petty trade, remains limited.

Within this political-economic context, then, the means by which returnees and other town residents could ensure their survival were highly circumscribed and coded by gender. While a minority of men, mostly those that had some level of formal education, have invested in building and maintaining the social networks that might lead them to opportunities for salaried work and/or political advancement, women and low status men have turned to traditional practices of labor mobilization and reward to ensure their sustenance on a personal and household level. As I have shown, these social networks maintenance practices are critical to accessing opportunities, however they also draw a considerable portion of expendable income away from social reproduction within the family towards men’s conspicuous consumption. Though it may be productive to consider the effort and time invested in these practices work in that they produce value for those participating, considering this kind of work alongside the very real (and productive) labor that women dedicate

towards subsistence production and social reproduction caused residents to question notions of value.

The contradictory notions of labor and value in Chukudum played out occasionally in public, but more often in the private negotiations around the responsibility for household provisioning and the rights over the distribution of produce, salaries and income from petty trade. This process of negotiation is as of yet unsettled, as the interweaving stories of James and his wife Karina and the quote from the beer maker Tata suggest. James, a junior member of the political elite in Chukudum gained social recognition and ensured his positions within the local civil administration by engaging in the social drinking that was expected of him. But the portion of his income that he expended in this way caused him trouble with his wife at home. Karina felt, and expressed her belief that more of her husband income, and time should be dedicated towards support of his children. Absent a reliable contribution, she engaged in various forms of work to ensure that her children would be taken care of and well fed. By producing alcohol, she was able to earn much needed money that she used to purchase food and items that she could not produce herself. Importantly, James had no claim over the income she earned herself. Karina could allocate the funds as she saw fit, and this gave her a considerable degree of autonomy from her husband in the day-to-day management of household consumption. Income from alcohol production was supplemented by occasional work at as a cook for the school and by her considerable labor investment in subsistence production, which played the greatest part in ensuring that the family's needs were met.

The common sense ideas around labor around value as well as about space, authority, difference and material prosperity that grew out of camp-life played out in novel, and sometimes unexpected ways as refugees returned to Chukudum, confronting and shaping anew the set of spatial constraints and opportunities there. A common story of refugee return migration is the persistence of camp-based social practices among those that repatriate. This is often reflected in a preference for

resettlement in urban areas, where they seek out paid work and engage in petty trade to make ends meet. Commoditization in refugee camp settings reconfigures the ways in which refugees organized and valued their labor, a process that is often linked with proletarianization. In South Sudan, significant numbers of returnees have indeed sought out urban lives, but many more have returned to rural areas to pursue subsistence production. Low population densities and land abundance certainly play a role in the prioritization of subsistence agricultural and pastoral production over other livelihood strategies. In post-conflict (and post-return) South Sudan, subsistence production has been taken up by a significant numbers of returnees, even those who could claim much coveted 'salaries.' This has left subsistence production as the most secure option for provisioning families. By reinvesting in subsistence production, and in longstanding non-market systems for mobilizing labor, Chukudum residents (including returnees) are able to retain a degree of control over the conditions of their labor, enhancing their autonomy.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS



Primary students seek a view of Independence celebration.
Photo: Léonie Newhouse

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REFUGEE RETURN MIGRATION

This dissertation set out to give an account of the political economy of refugee return migration by exploring the recursive relationship between migration, socially produced space and material practices. Grounding my analysis in a particular return flow—between Kakuma Refugee Camp and Chukudum South Sudan—I show how space is produced through embodied material practices. I show how both space and practice are enlisted in the materialization of difference, which takes place through the mapping of particular categories of people to particular places. But my purpose extends beyond the generation of a general argument about the dialectical relationship

between the production of space and everyday practices, or about the factors that shape return migration. The research has also been motivated by a desire to make legible the everyday struggles of Didinga refugees and returnees for dignity and value alongside survival in the face of the extreme precarity that characterizes their lives.

My point of departure for this analysis has been to examine Kakuma Refugee Camp because concentrating refugees in camps has become a common-sense spatial strategy to deal with large influxes of needy people (Agier, 2002; Bookman, 2002; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hyndman, 2000; Jacobsen, 2005; Loescher & Milner, 2005). Intended as a space dedicated to fostering vulnerable life, camps are also a social technology that categorizes people and spatializes difference, with profound material effects. I argued that camp-space transforms refugees' material practices and subjectivities—producing a particular refugee *habitus*. Given that the majority of refugees that return to their home country do so from camps in neighboring countries, camp-based shifts in refugees' practices and subjectivities inform the livelihood strategies and economic wellbeing of returning refugees. As a result, they can (and do) profoundly impact processes of post-conflict peace-building and development.

While it is possible to generalize (to some extent) about the nature of camp economies, the lasting legacies of camp life are as contingent on the particular contours of the political economy faced by refugees once they leave the camp and return home as they are on the transformations in material practices with in the camp. As people return to their countries of origin, some of these camp-based practices persist. Yet many others are so tied to the particular spatial and material arrangement of the camp that they fade away when refugees confront a striking different spatial economy, as was the case in Chukudum. More critically, however, the re-production of a logic of spatial segregation, where difference is made material through the coding of particular places or sets

of productive practices as appropriate or inappropriate for certain kinds of people has been an enduring legacy of refugee camp life.

The refugee camp is a particular socio-spatial technology that is organized around coding and spatializing difference—between refugees, local residents, Kenyan authorities, and humanitarian workers. As with all socially produced spaces, the camps have profound material effects. In the case of the camp, particular spaces and entitlements were joined together through power-laden processes of social categorization. The production of camp space—through administrative regulations, active policing and violent enforcement—was at the same time a process through which difference, material entitlements and space were articulated. In contrast to much contemporary theorizations of “camps” as a space of exception, the refugee camp served to draw together populations across categorical differences (Darling, 2009; Franke, 2009; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Mountz, 2010; 2011; Ramadan, 2009). The particular spatiality of the camp has led to the emergence of an active economy of exchange between hosts, refugees, and authorities, which has resulted in deepening of commodity relations in both the refugee population with whom I worked and the Turkana host population. While commoditization had long been associated with ‘encampment’ and many scholars have written about camp economies (Brees, 2008; Callamard, 1994; De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000; Jacobsen, 2005; Koenig & Dube, 2005; Porter et al., 2008; Werker, 2007; Wilson, 1992), my work draws attention to the critical role of space in understanding these processes and formations.

Kakuma refugee camp was also generative of a set of material practices that reflect the particular spatial constraints and opportunities of camp life. The provision of food-aid to refugees and their exclusion from productive resources such as land, pasture and environmental resources formed the conditions of possibility for deepening commodity relations in which economic exchanges occur across lines of categorical difference. The under-provision of basic needs further contributed to an active nexus of trade between refugees and host populations. In Kakuma,

bartering—rather than market mediate sales—played a catalytic role in the process of commoditization. At the same time, opportunities to earn money in the camp were constrained by legal prohibitions against refugee work, administrative regulations aimed at policing illegitimate forms of exchange, and shaped by discourses that coded particular productive practices as either beneficial income generating strategies or ‘negative coping strategies’ Within these social, legal and discursive constraints, women living in the camp sought out new ways to profit from their labor in order to earn supplement rations and bolster familial consumption. In that process, refugee women came to account for and value their own labor in a commoditized manner.

Taken together, the major impacts on everyday practices and subjectivities of living in Kakuma refugee camp were two-fold. First, the camp normalized the spatialization of difference and its articulation with material entitlements. Secondly, camp residents increasingly relied on mediated exchanges to provision their households, and came to revalue their own labor in terms of its ultimate exchange value. Both of these developments shaped refugees’ subjectivities and common-sense understandings of themselves, their own value and their place in the world. While existing research on refugee camps remark on the fact of commoditization and changing practices, there have been few ethnographic accounts of this process. My research foregrounds the articulation between material constraints, commoditization, and practices and explores how these shape subjectivities and produce new common sense understandings of labor and value.

The common sense ideas around labor, value as well as about space, authority, difference and material prosperity that grew out of camp-life played out in novel, and sometimes unexpected ways as refugees returned to Chukudum, confronting and shaping anew the set of spatial constraints and opportunities there. During the second civil war, a confluence of events—the designation of Chukudum by the SPLA as a key command center, an influx of Dinka displaced from Bor as a result of factional fight within the SPLA, a laxity in discipline among the troops, economic opportunity

deriving from the control of cross border trade and a surfeit of firearms—combined to produced a frontier economy in Chukudum. In the mid 2000's the end of overt hostilities and attempts to reform SPLA governance opened the way for displaced people to return to the town. As residents began to return to Chukudum, they produced a new material landscape through socially mediated practices of inhabitation and subsistence production.

In a manner analogous (if obverse) to the spatialization of difference that developed in Kakuma, Didinga residents of Chukudum drew on commonly held understandings of autochthony to reclaim authority over mobility, land, resources and local politics. By re-embedding decisions around land and resource use in social life—in particular in the set of dense social relations that extend from the immediate family outward to kin, clan, neighbors and tribe—returnees countered the authority of entrepreneurial pioneers to lay claim to profits and resources. By their nature, the social ties that allowed Didinga to be successful in staking claims to the space of the town created their own exclusions—exclusions that were primarily directed at creating a livable balance between local residents, soldier-traders, entrepreneurial pioneers arriving in town looking who sought profits in the absence of any coherent and consolidated political authority.

But, while the assertion of Didinga authority over land, resources and political life in town exemplify the entrenchment of the segregatory logic the camp, Didinga residents were not *merely* engaging in reactionary ethnic boundary-making practices. During the war, the possibility of subsistence production was largely foreclosed for refugees living in Kakuma. Return from the camp to a place where ethnic and family ties ensured access to land and a productive resource base (and where basic sustenance was not supported by international aid) prompted many returnees to re-assess the value of subsistence production. The reassertion of Didinga authority over land and environmental resources was also a way of ensuring a degree of autonomy from commercial elites, bad road conditions, and security related inflationary pressures. Didinga people's experiences during

the war left residents of Chukudum extremely wary of becoming too dependent on external actors—whether traders or humanitarian organizations, markets or aid—for their everyday survival.

A common story of refugee return migration is the persistence of camp-based social practices among those that repatriate. This is often reflected in a preference for resettlement in urban areas, where they seek out paid work and engage in petty trade to make ends meet. Commoditization in refugee camp settings reconfigures the ways in which refugees organized and valued their labor, a process that is often linked with proletarianization. In South Sudan, significant numbers of returnees have indeed sought out urban lives, but many more have returned to rural areas to pursue subsistence production. Low population densities and land abundance certainly play a role in the prioritization of subsistence agricultural and pastoral production over other livelihood strategies. In post-conflict (and post-return) South Sudan, subsistence production has been taken up by a significant numbers of returnees, even those who could claim much coveted ‘salaries.’

However, when read against the extreme precarity that characterized waged-work in the broader South Sudanese economy, the ability to connect labor to land without the mediation of the market offered a critical means of ensuring sustenance. The revaluation of subsistence has taken place in a context where government and non-government employers have devalued labor through the use of ‘incentives’ and where there is a high degree of uncertainty surrounding remuneration for salaried work. Given the restricted avenues by which cash is infused into the local economy in Chukudum, the earning potential of commodity production and petty trade, remains limited. This has left subsistence production as the most secure option for provisioning families. By reinvesting in subsistence production, and in longstanding non-market systems for mobilizing labor, Chukudum residents (including returnees) are able to retain a degree of control over the conditions of their labor, enhancing their autonomy.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP

South Sudan Studies

My dissertation offers a detailed and empirically rich analysis of social and economic life of people and places that have been largely excluded from scholarship. As such it represents an important contribution to knowledge about the political economy of contemporary South Sudan. Given the long history of conflict, there is a lack of rigorous research that documents the everyday struggles of South Sudanese people for survival, dignity and prosperity. While more research has been undertaken since the end of overt hostilities in 2005, much of this research is bound up with the short time scales and particular policy interests of the humanitarian agencies and organizations that both fund studies and act as gate keepers that can determine access to field sites and populations (Duffield, 2010; Hovil & Service, 2010; Martin & Mosel, 2011; Pantuliano & Fenton, 2010; Phillips, 2011; Schomerus & Allen, 2010). As Historian of South Sudan Douglas Johnson pointedly remarks:

In the absence of well-established research institutions in South Sudan, most research today is donor-funded and -initiated and supported by NGOs, who set the research agenda and provide the back-up support to researchers in the field. NGOs being increasingly security-conscious and security minded, entrenched within what Mark Duffield has termed “fortified compounds”, there are frequent formal and informal restrictions placed on researchers’ movements and contacts with the communities with which they are supposed to engage. In some ways we are returning to the days of early twentieth century, with the constricted research of the steamer-bound Seligmans...Research in South Sudan is in danger of being captured by the methods of fly-in-fly-out journalism and the hit-and-run rapid rural appraisals of NGOs. These can produce little more than snapshots, rather than extended and nuanced analyses."

(D. H. Johnson, 2012)

As Johnson suggests, how research is conducted profoundly shapes the kind of knowledge that is produced. My research on refugee return migration and everyday life in Chukudum works against the tendency of instrumental short-term rapid response research aimed at identifying action points for interventions. Instead I provide the kind of detailed and complex analysis that is dependent on long-term engagement with a community. While the picture I paint of returnee life is filled with the

messy contradictions of everyday life, I believe that such nuanced and multisided portrayals contribute to a fuller picture of the impact that return migration has on both people and places.

Towards a Feminist Research Praxis of Encounter

My research also forwards a praxis of research which offers the recognition of the body's inherent precariousness as grounds on which to build a radical politics of engagement. Building on the recent work Judith Bulter (2009), I follow fellow feminist geographers such as Pratt (2004) and Hyndman's (2010b) in foregrounding the materiality of the body and its vulnerability to harm as a basis for opening up the research encounter to the possibility of political engagement. As Hyndman (2010b, p. 250) writes,

Bulter is arguing for a common humanity catalyzed by an ethical encounter, a context catalyzed by risk to the social body. The content of that encounter is not yet specified, leaving open any fixed notions of 'just war' or legitimate uses of violence.

This suggests that a key aspect of ethics is based in the universality of risk to the social body. Given the uneven power that inheres in the research process, especially in context such as South Sudan where research participants daily face levels extreme levels of risk and vulnerability, my decisions around mobility and where to reside, and thus implicitly my embrace my own physical vulnerability were pivotal to becoming fully human in the eyes of the community. Though I retained my privileged status as a visitor, a researcher, and a white American, my willingness to expose myself to the risks of daily life provided the grounds for encounters that broke out of the social role in which I had been cast and opened the way for engagement that was both personal and political. Research based on an ethic of encounter contributes both the development of a practice of feminist care ethics (Atkinson, Lawson, & Wiles, 2011; Lawson, 2007), as well as to the emerging field of subaltern geopolitics (Koopman, 2011; Sharp, 2011; R. J. Smith, 2011) in that ways in which research is conducted and the kinds of knowledge produced is based on a recognition of human interdependency.

The Materiality of Camps

Another contribution of my research is a re-assessment of the traction of Agamben's notion of the 'state of exception' in characterizing modern sovereignty (Agamben, 1998; 2005). In geography, a number of scholars have built upon Agamben's work to critically examine spatialities of exception, especially in relation to refugees and asylum seekers and the global war on terror (Darling, 2009; Franke, 2009; Gregory, 2004; Minca, 2007; Ramadan, 2009). Despite geographers' fascination with his formulation of sovereign power and the attractiveness of his critical reading of the camp as a spatial technology of sovereign violence, Agamben's theorizations do not reflect the variegated and contingent operation of sovereignties at intersecting scales. Agamben's theorizations (Agamben, 1998; 2005) are often used to highlight the contradictory actions of states in relation to abject others (Doty, 2011; Pratt, 2005). However, his work also reproduces the fiction that sovereignty inheres in states, and falls into what political geographer John Agnew (1994) has called the territorial trap.

Additionally, as Ramadan (2009) and Darling (2009) point out, the discursive equation of camps as 'a spaces of exception' may be analytically productive in some aspects, but deeply problematic in others (both analytically and politically). More importantly, why there may be some analytical attractiveness to theory that employs spatial metaphors, more often than not the metaphor distracts from an ability to apprehend the empirical reality of the spaces which it seeks to explain. My research suggests that by focusing unduly on the sovereign act, such an equation works to obscure the everyday, embodied micro-political activities that produce camp space. In such an analytic, it is too easy to see camps as wholly segregated off from everyday life. What is missed in this conceptualization is the very materiality of any particular camp and the intimacy brought by proximity. Camps are made by, and made up of a constellation of social and material relations. Rather than a space of exception where residents are relegated to abject existence, the camp emerges

instead as a nexus of interconnection in which bodies, goods and ideas are constantly moving across spatial and categorical barriers. My research shows that the ways in which refugee camps materialize difference have profound and lasting impacts on the practices and subjectivities of the people that live and work in and near them.

Precarity: Gendered Labor & Value in a Diverse Economy

Throughout this dissertation, I have focused on labor as one way to frame the transformations in material practices and subjectivities of refugees as they move from camp to home. I show how in the camp where money increasingly mediated various forms of exchange, refugee women took up various income generating practices to fill the gap in consumptive needs resulting from insufficient rations. Given the restrictions on most forms of productive work in the camp, choices around how to expend labor were made in dialogue with an assessment of the relative risk of various income generating schemes. This way of organizing and valuing labor—by considering the exchange value of commodities that they produced—belies a deepening commoditization that was underway in the camp.

The common sense ideas around labor and value played out in novel, and sometimes, unexpected ways as refugees returned to Chukudum, confronting and shaping anew the set of spatial constraints and opportunities there. While petty commodity production, especially alcohol production, persisted in Chukudum, the majority of town residents (returnees and stayees alike) invested their labor in subsistence production, as it was the most secure way to see returns to their labor. I argue that one reason why subsistence production came to dominate the local economy was the general precarity that characterized all forms of work in the broader South Sudanese economy. Yet the choice to pursue subsistence production was also based in the desire to achieve a degree of autonomy from a set of constraining factors that were largely outside of town residents control. By attending to the complex factors that shaped returnees decisions invest their labor in subsistence, I

contribute to the call of Gibson-Graham (2006) for scholarship to recognize and represent the non-capitalist ways of organizing production, consumption and exchange in a diverse economy.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Incentive work as a ‘Humanitarian’ labor regime

Last month, ‘national’—i.e. South Sudanese—staff working for UN Agencies in South Sudan went on strike. Wide salary differentials between national and international staff and the use of short-term contracts were among the grievances that they hoped their action would address. Similar complaints were voiced by the refugee teachers, program and medical staff working on an incentive basis in Kakuma Refugee Camp a year earlier. In the last chapter of this dissertation, I briefly discussed how demands for under- and uncompensated labor have become normalized among humanitarian and development organizations working in South Sudan. Much of the labor that is critical to the successful functioning of programing is devalued by discursively coding it as *voluntary* when conducted by local residents. Though the recruitment process for such jobs is competitive, successful applicants can expect to be paid incentive payments rather than salaries as compensation. Often undertaking months or years of such undercompensated work is the only way for jobs seekers to build their experience so that they can be competitive for more permanent salaried posts.

The ubiquity of the reliance on ‘voluntary’ work in development and humanitarian programs is not limited to South Sudan. Discussions with other researchers and a cursory review of the promotional and recruitment materials of development and humanitarian organizations suggest that this phenomenon is widespread. As such the proliferation of incentive work deserves more considered scholarly attention. And, it is important to note that the phenomenon of compelling volunteerism as a pre-requisite for paid employment is not limited to humanitarian work in the

Global South. Future research might productively explore the parallels between the de-valuation of labor that occurs in incentive work and the normalization of periods of ‘pre-work’—such as unpaid internships or, worse yet, pay-to-work volunteer positions brokered by volunteer placement agencies—which many young people in the Global North feel they are required to undertake in order to gain the requisite ‘experience’ to obtain paid positions.

Youth, urbanization & politics in South Sudan

One strength of qualitative methodologies is that they allow research to be sensitive and responsive to the messiness of everyday social reality. So while the primary focus of my research was to understand the impact of return migration on a small rural town in South Sudan, I soon realized that in focusing primarily on subsistence livelihood in rural areas, the practices on of young returnees were underrepresented. In fact, many young people (18-30 year olds) were not particularly interested in pursuing rural livelihoods, or saw them as a temporary option while they waited for other opportunities to come along. Instead they looked to the excitement and opportunities of nearby towns as the preferred place to make a life for themselves. These observations suggest that, far from being a simple return to places of origin, return migration after displacement must be seen in relation to broader social processes, including urbanization.

South Sudan is in the midst of a period of rapid urbanization, which has only accelerated with the end of the civil war in 2005 and ongoing return migration from the North and from surrounding states. In reference to return migration in particular, many returnees prefer urban locations for an assortment of interconnected reasons that are social, economic and political in nature. These include: improved access to amenities such as school and health services; economic opportunities associated with development or government projects; persisting insecurity in rural areas; and shifting cultural preferences for the more dense social life that characterizes urban areas. Of those who do return to rural areas, many do not end up remaining there, moving back to urban

areas after a relatively short period of time. This kind of continuing mobility and preference for urban places among returnees, especially the young, is born out by my observations Chukudum, as well as in the urban centers of Juba, Torit and Kapoeta. Many of the younger returnees I spoke with had grown up or lived their entire lives in densely populated refugee camps and informal urban settlements and have no experience with agricultural production. Among this generation of young returnees, urban areas were more familiar than their rural areas of origin. Rather than going back to the rural, pastoral and agricultural communities of their parents, many have chosen to seek opportunities in towns and cities—ranging from small county administrative and trading centers like Chukudum to Juba, the national capital. My research suggests that the realities of urbanization and continuing mobility will be critical factors in the political and economic life of South Sudan now and in the future. These modest and preliminary findings point to a need for more research into dynamics of rural-urban relations, urbanization and continuing mobility among returnees in South Sudan.

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APPENDIX I
CHUKUDUM LIVELIHOOD AND INCOME GENERATION SURVEY
INSTRUMENT

Cover Sheet

Part 1: Biographical Information about the Household (*household data*)

Number of people in the household:

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Adults: _____ | _____ | Children: _____ | _____ |

Are any of the household members returnees? Y / N

How many? _____

Are any of the household members employed? Y / N
(receive a regular salary, e.g. county gov., ADRA, NPA)

How many? _____

Part 2: Livelihood Strategies (*household data*)

Section A: CULTIVATION

1. Does anyone in the household cultivate? Y / N

If NO complete the rest of this page then skip to Section B. If YES skip the rest of this page and go to question 4.

2. Why not? (*circle as many reasons as stated If No access to land/garden continue to question 3.*)

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| No interest | Employed full time | Disabled | No seeds/tools |
| Work as a Trader | No agricultural skills | No access to land/garden | |

Other (*list reasons given*): _____

3. Why don't you have access to a garden? (*circle as many reasons as stated*)

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Not from Chukudum originally | someone using my land | |
| Orphaned | dispute | Fear to travel to distant garden |

Other (*list reasons given*): _____

4. How many gardens are cultivated by household members? _____

fill in the chart below for *each* garden

tick all that apply

(if more than space provides, use back of this sheet)

| Household Location Consump. | What crops? | Season | Sale |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ _____ <i>(1st garden)</i> _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| _____ _____ <i>(2nd garden)</i> _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| _____ _____ <i>(3rd garden)</i> _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| _____ _____ <i>(4th garden)</i> _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| _____ _____ <i>(5th garden)</i> _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ | _____ _____ _____ |

5. In a typical year how many 50 kg sacs of grain:

(If they don't cultivate one of the named grains write N/A in the blank)

| | <i>Maize</i> | <i>Sorghum</i> | <i>Millet</i> | <i>Don't Know</i> |
|--|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Do you expect to harvest? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Do you need for household consumption? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Do you send them any money to help support them?

Y / N

if YES: How often do you send money?

Weekly Monthly Every few months Once a year

Every few years

How do you send / receive money?

Explain: _____

Part 4: Individual Biographic Information (*individual data*)

Address the questions in Part 4-6 to the respondent as an individual:

Age: _____ estimate / certain Gender (*circle one*): F / M

Where were you born? _____

Were you ever a Refugee or IDP? Y / N

Did you ever live in a Refugee/IDP Camp? Y / N

Name of

Camp/s: _____

—

List (generally) the places you have lived since 1992:

(if more than space provides, use back of this sheet)

| Location | From yyyy / to yyyy |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 1. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 6. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 7. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 8. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 9. _____ | _____ / _____ |
| 10. _____ | _____ / _____ |

Part 5: Collective Work and Exchange (*individual data*)

1. Do you participate in collective work parties? Y / N

Frequency: Never Sometimes Often

What kind of work?

Field prep Planting Weeding Harvesting Construction

2. Do you host collective work parties? Y / N

Frequency: Never Sometimes Often

What kind of work?

Field prep Planting Weeding Harvesting Construction

3. Do you receive goods or foodstuffs from family living in the highlands? Y / N

Goods Foodstuffs

4. Do you provide goods or foodstuffs to family living in the highlands? Y / N

Goods Foodstuffs

6. Do you engage in field exchange with family living up mountain? Y / N

(by field exchange we mean planting crops that do well in the lowlands for family living up mountain, in exchange for them planting crops that grow best in the highlands for you.)

Part 6: Income Generation Activities (*individual data*)

This part of the survey is different for men and women.

- If the respondent is FEMALE complete **Section A** and skip **Section B**.
- If the respondent is MALE skip **Section A** and complete **Section B**.

Section A: Women's Income Generation Activities

1. Do you engage in work for pay? Y / N Occupation: _____

2. Are you a trader/business owner? Y / N
 Shop Stall Hotel Bar Lodge

3. Which activities do you do regularly to make money?

| Activity | How often? <i>(daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally)</i> | Income <i>(specify time period, i.e. per day/week/month/year)</i> |
|--|---|--|
| firewood | _____ | _____ |
| mandazi/chapatti | _____ | _____ |
| greens/vegetable sale | _____ | _____ |
| charcoal | _____ | _____ |
| prepared foods (cassava, beans & maize) | _____ | _____ |
| merti ci yori | _____ | _____ |
| mocoyo | _____ | _____ |
| sico | _____ | _____ |
| grass for thatching | _____ | _____ |
| Other <i>(list below)</i> | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

4. How do you spend the money you earn?

School fees vegetables cooking oil salt soap uniform travel/transportation
 grain grinding clothes firewood charcoal give to husband seeds
 pulses livestock beer/alcohol tea ingredients soda
 drugs/ medicine goods for trade re-invest in supplies meat construction

Other/Explanation:

5. Does your husband have a say in how you spend the money you earn?

YES NO NOT Married / NO Husband

Explanation:

Section B: Men's Income Generating Activities

1. Do you engage in work for pay? Y / N Occupation: _____

2. Are you a trader/ business owner? Y / N
 Shop Stall Hotel Bar Lodge

3. Which activities do you do regularly to make money?

| Activity | How often? <i>(daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally)</i> | Income <i>(specify time period, i.e. per day/week/month/year)</i> |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Collect firewood | _____ | _____ |
| Bamboos | _____ | _____ |
| Poles for construction | _____ | _____ |
| Bricks | _____ | _____ |
| Trade Tobaccos | _____ | _____ |
| Motorbike Taxi | _____ | _____ |
| Roast Meat | _____ | _____ |
| Beekeeping/Honey | _____ | _____ |
| Construction | _____ | _____ |
| Other <i>(list below)</i> | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

4. How do you spend the money you earn?

- School fees vegetables cooking oil salt soap uniform
- travel/transportation
- grain grinding clothes firewood charcoal give to husband seeds
- pulses livestock beer/alcohol tea ingredients soda
- drugs/ medicine goods for trade re-invest in supplies meat
- construction

Other/Explanation:

5. Does your wife/wives have a say in how you spend the money you earn?

YES NO NOT Married / NO Wife

Explanation:
