

MOBILITY AS EMANCIPATION: VIEWING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN UGANDA THROUGH THE DWELLING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT The natural resources surrounding Lake Albert in Uganda have always attracted a wide range of migrants from northern and western Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Rwanda. This study focuses on human mobility related to subsistence activities in a post-immigration and multi-ethnic village (Runga) on the eastern side of Lake Albert. In 2004, the rediscovery of oil in the Lake Albert basin⁽¹⁾ led to indigenous people, mostly of Nyoro decent, registering the land in order to acquire profit from the oil company Tullow. Furthermore, with the growing importance of fish in the global market, Beach Management Units (BMUs) were introduced to the landing sites in the Hoima district of Lake Albert to retain fish resources for national profit (Tahara, 2008). Related to these developments, national and regional policies have become increasingly constricted to protect their respective interests. As a result, several actions have negatively impacted peoples' everyday lives, for example, the burning of fishing nets and campaigns to drive immigrants away from the landing sites of Lake Albert. In response, mobility has become a flexible strategy for people to improve their lives, and to become liberated from national and ethnic boundaries. Indeed, this analysis of spatial and social mobility transcends traditional heterogeneous indicators such as ethnicity and nationality, to demonstrate how individuals can be emancipated from boundaries through the activities of dwelling. Conceptualising human mobility across borders in this way contributes to the understanding of mechanisms underlying social inequality as well as uncovering the creativity and conviviality of human beings.

Key Words: Mobility; Globalisation; Subsistence; Dwelling; Conviviality.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to examine how people's mobility can be potentially related to everyday strategies for subsistence. In this globalised era, the nation state has become increasingly powerful and wields direct influence over its citizens. This has been especially evident in Uganda with the rising importance of fish resources and the rediscovery of oil. Globalisation has affected mobility trends in villages alongside Lake Albert, such as Runga, through its influence on national and regional policies, and government decentralisation in Uganda. Indeed, national policies have changed significantly due to global market forces. For example, as demand for Nile perch and other large fish has increased, Uganda's Fishery Department has adjusted policies and laws, which affects every fishing village on the Ugandan side of Lake Albert. Fish have become an important commodity used to acquire foreign currency (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and

Fisheries, 2004). The Government has, therefore, pushed fishers to focus on catching large Nile perch for export, which conflicts with the traditional practice of catching smaller fish for subsistence or local sale. Additionally, the rediscovery of oil has motivated native Ugandans to migrate to the Lake Albert area and drive out existing migrants. The impact of global forces upon the national management of valuable natural resources has, therefore, forced individuals at the local level to respond and react in various ways. Indeed, one key response has been to employ their agency and engage in acts of mobility.

Accordingly, the focus of the paper is upon people's everyday practices that aim to improve their lives. Specifically, this is examined from the perspective of dwelling, since such flexible strategies may be able to soften the control of the nation state and regional politics. Furthermore, the concept of mobility is employed in a broader sense. To understand individuals' practices as tactics, mobility can be used to explain not only spatial and social movement but also the transformation of subsistence, ethnicity and nationality. The intention here is not to define mobility, but to explore its components and characteristics.

The paper begins by describing human mobility in the social space of a post-immigration society to understand how human beings can survive under suppressed conditions with strangers. Historically, people on the African continent have moved to escape unfavourable environmental conditions related to climate change or war. Narotzky & Besnier (2014: S13) have noted that 'uncertainty, then, may transform into a project for the future and motivate people to mobilise for that aim,' meaning that even the prospect of a better future can motivate people to move. Accordingly, mobility can be a matter of survival or a way to improve personal or familial conditions.

Kirumira (2016) states that African people are highly mobile, but simultaneously anchored. Mobility does not mean freedom from others, boundaries, or power, but the decision and the desire to be free, whether it is forced or chosen. Faist (2013) argues that movement across borders is crucial for addressing inequality, and that mobility supposedly reflects the necessity for global economic competition. Human mobility is, therefore, one way to address inequality.⁽²⁾ Nyamnjoh (2013: 670) stresses that 'mobility, connections and interconnections should be understood as emotional, relational and social phenomena as complex, contradictory and messy realities.' Indeed, there are many ways to survive in difficult conditions, and deciding to escape through movement is one of those choices. Despair can cause people to run away emotionally and relationally. Furthermore, Nyamnjoh (2013: 674) continues, 'conviviality between mobility and immobility makes possible otherwise unlikely cultural and economic conversations, just as it makes possible the playing out at local levels of global tensions and power struggles.' Importantly, then, mobility is not just about survival under suppressed situations, but also the creation of convivial spaces of living.

To sketch out mobility, the dwelling perspective is adopted. Dwellings are created in the everyday life activities of subsistence. As explained by Ingold (1993: 158), 'life process' is the process of landscape formation, and 'tasks' are

the constitutive acts of life, which means that ‘the taskscape is to labour what the landscape is to land.’ Ingold (2000) proposes the dwelling perspective as an alternative to the commodity perspective, which defines tasks in the private sphere as ‘leisure’ and those in the public realm as ‘work.’ An individual’s employment that is related to their mobility cannot easily be differentiated from work that is connected to other activities. Accordingly, the dwelling perspective can be usefully employed to consider work as part of an individuals’ daily life. Indeed, Harris (2005: 198) further explains the concept of taskscape when stating ‘the taskscape is thus composed from a multitude of activities; and will change depending on the work that people do. [...] The taskscape is a useful term here, because it is flexible, able to accommodate diverse activities and is sensitive to historical shaping.’ Consequently, the dwelling perspective and the notion of tasks can suggest an alternative account of mobility, and cultivate a sense of conviviality.

In sum, this study argues that human mobility can soften state control, which tends to exert increasing power over individuals as it responds to global economic forces. First, I describe the mobility of people related to dwellings after 2002, when the control of central and local government became stricter. Second, I elucidate the construction of this social space and outline the pattern of people’s movement during the colonial and war periods, from a dwelling perspective.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

I. Research Site

Lake Albert is an inland body of water covering 5,300 km² along the borders of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Lake Albert has an elevation of 621 metres, which is much lower than other domestic lakes, including Lake Victoria (1,134 m). Annual precipitation in this area is between 800 to 1,200 mm, which is significantly lower than yearly rainfall in Kampala (1,200–1,600 mm). There are approximately 27 different fish species living in Lake Albert (Worthington, 1929). There are several fishing villages located along Lake Albert, and Runga is one village that is situated on the eastern side.

Since 1985, the social and economic activities of the Ugandan people have been organised through the Local Council (LC) system.⁽³⁾ There are two kinds of local political system in Runga, which is similar to other fishing villages in Uganda. The first is the Local Council 1 (LC1), which was introduced in 1995 in order to decentralise Ugandan Governmental policy. Runga is a LC1-level village, which belongs to the Hoima District (LC5), Bugahya County (LC4), Kigorobya Sub County (LC3), and Kibiro Parish (LC2). LC1 executives consist of a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary general, youth representative, women’s representative, and secretaries for finance, information, defence, the environment and production, and the disabled. Unsolvable cases at the LC1 level are sent to Kigorobya LC3 executives. The other type of local political system in the village

is run by Beach Management Units (BMUs), formerly centre master teams, which deal with fishing matters such as stolen fishing nets and paddles, misuse of boats, and complaints concerning fish distribution.⁽⁴⁾

This study focuses on Runga, a multi-ethnic village located on the shores of Lake Albert on the north-west side of the Great Rift Valley. It is isolated from the other villages in the Hoima District by a deep escarpment. The Hoima district was previously the centre of the Bunyoro Kingdom, and its major ethnic group is the Banyoro. Then, the Bagungu (a sub-group of the Banyoro, singular Mugungu) remained around the shore of the lake. However, most people in Runga are Alur, an ethnic group that came to the area along the lake routes from the DRC and the West Nile region in northern Uganda. The map in Fig. 1 shows the landing sites around Lake Albert that were examined for this study. People from Runga were living and working around all of the landing sites, indicating that there is constant temporal movement in the area.

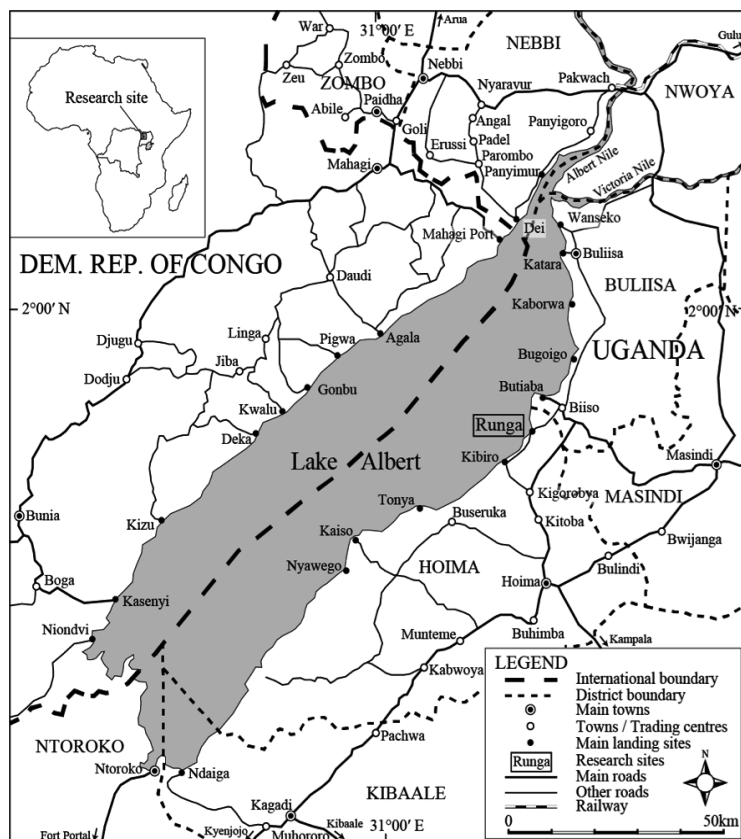


Fig. 1. Lake Albert and the main landing sites
Based on the map at the Department of Geography, Makerere University

II. The Multi-Ethnic and Transnational Village

Currently, there are 3,429 people living in 781 households in Runga. The village of Runga consists of five areas: Central, Mbegu, Agu, Nyamasoga, and Kakoma (Fig. 2). Each area includes elders who are responsible for mediating family problems and other minor issues. The names of the areas in Runga describe their respective flora and fauna, as explained by Ingold (1993: 152), when stating ‘the landscape tells—or rather *is*—a story.’ The landscape demonstrates their relationship and the history of immigration.

The Bagungu, who mainly reside in the Central area, are an indigenous ethnic group and were originally fishers and hunters along the shore of Lake Albert. According to the information of LC1 staff, the Bagungu comprise less than 20% of the population and mostly migrated for business purposes. This includes operating small commodity shops or restaurants in addition to fishery as net and boat owners. Alur were the first people to reach Runga in the 1960s. They are widely dispersed across the village but are more concentrated in Mbegu and Agu. Alur constitute approximately 70–80% of the total villagers and originally came from the West Nile and the DRC. Historically, the Alur were divided between two nation states,⁽⁵⁾ namely Uganda and the DRC, during the colonial period. More than 80% of the Alur in Runga originated from the DRC. Most Alur are engaged in fishing activities and some of them also farm on the top of the escarpment with land rented from Bagungu.

There are 12 households of pastoralists called Bararoo (singular Muraroo) who successively moved to the village in search of water and grass along Lake Albert since 1985. They currently live in Nyamasoga and Kakoma, with approximately 300 cattle. There are two groups of Bararoo: eight households of the Basongora and Ankore from Kasese in south-west Uganda, and four households of the Banyarwanda, originally from Rwanda. After the 2000s, the

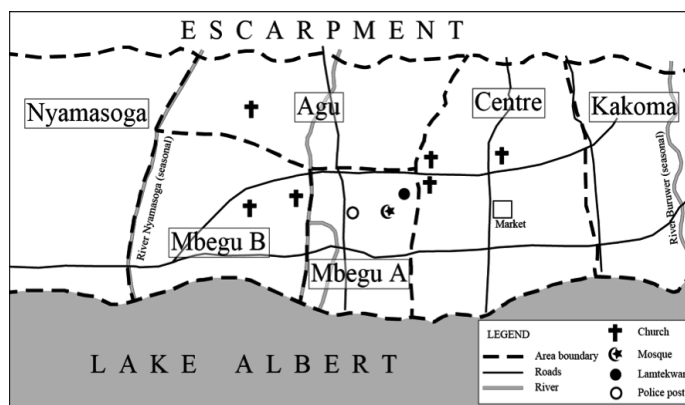


Fig. 2. Village areas

An image map of Jenaro Oungi (a resident of Runga, 4 May, 2009)

Baganda (singular Muganda) and Bafumibra (singular Mufumbira) migrated to Runga for business purposes (Table 1).

Linguistically, Alur is a Nilotic language, while Lugungu, Luraroo, Luganda, and Kinyarwanda are all Bantu languages. Alur is the *lingua franca* in the village, but Swahili is also sometimes used to overcome any language barriers. Alur and Bantu translators typically work during public meetings, such as LC and Beach Management Units (BMUs) meetings.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of Runga

Ethnic Group	Origin	Proportion	First arrival	Language	Main Economic Activities
Mugungu/Bagungu	Bullisa	Less than 20%	1960s	Lugungu	Fisher Kiosk owner
Alur	West Nile in Uganda DRC	70–80%	1960s	Alur	Fisher Fishery worker Farmer
Muraroo/ Bararoo	Kasese (Basongora and Ankore) Rwanda (Banyarwanda)	8 households 4 households	ca.1985	Luraroo	Pastoralist
Muganda/ Baganda	Mostly Kampala and Jinja	10–20 people	ca. 2002	Luganda	Fishmonger
Mufumbira/ Bafumbira	Mostly Rwanda via other landing sites	More than 20 people	ca. 2013	Kinyarwanda	Fishmonger
Others: Munyoro, Acholi, Mugisu, Musoga, Ukebu, etc.					Fishmonger Kiosk owner

Source: Author interviews (2015–2017)

III. Direct Control by the Central and Regional Government

On August 5, 2002, direct control of Lake Albert's landing sites was absorbed by Uganda's Fishery Department. Personnel from Entebbe's Fishery Department visited each house, accompanied by armed soldiers, to search for illegal fishing nets and undersized fish.⁽⁶⁾ The existence of illegal fishing nets in the area was reported to the District Fishery Officer three months prior to the raids, during which non-regulation nets were burned. Most villagers were using small mesh gill or seine nets, called *marafuku* in the local tongue, which are appropriate for catching small fish⁽⁷⁾ to meet daily subsistence needs. Similar government

raids were carried out four times between 2002 and 2004.

Furthermore, in 2004, the Residential District Commissioner (RDC) visited each landing site in the Hoima district with the intention of removing Alur people from the area. During this so-called ‘Alur *Dogi*’ (Alur Go) campaign, the RDC came to Runga with soldiers and claimed ‘here there are too many Alur, and I can’t differentiate between the Alur from Uganda and the DRC. Go back to your hometowns immediately, and come back with your documents issued by the LC1 within one week. To the Alur from DRC, never come back, or you will be killed upon your return.’ Soldiers sang ‘*U koni wapi? U koni Congo?*’ in Swahili, which literally translates to ‘Where are you from? Are you from the DRC?’ The harsh rhetoric caused many villagers to flee back to their hometowns. The RDC also dismissed the Alur chairpersons of LC1 and the Acholi centre master, and appointed acting chairpersons from the Bagungu. The Bagungu and Banyoro are indigenous people who are counted as citizens of the regional government. By contrast, the Alur and Acholi are Nilotic peoples who have a peripheral role in the political system. The Bararoo are also immigrants but have informal connections to the central government since they are cattle keepers from the western part of Uganda, the birthplace of the current President.

This operation was not only motivated by discrimination against immigrants but was also a reflection of government decentralisation, a key feature of globalisation. As Kajaga (2015: 3) explains, ‘the creation of new districts and constituencies in Uganda is said to be necessitated by the desire to bring services nearer to the people, as well as ensuring effective political representation.’ Between 1986 and 2011, the number of districts increased from 33 to 111. The policy of decentralisation has resulted in the creation of more districts as well as the formation of new borders delineated along ethnic lines. Regional political entities have actively engaged in programmes to deter immigrants from participating in the political system. The rediscovery of oil has also prompted native Ugandans to move to the area and expel migrants. People have reacted to these events in different ways, with mobility being one of the most significant responses.

IV. Research Data

The research began in February 2001, and continued approximately every two months per year until August 2017. Additionally, in 2009, I stayed in the area for approximately six months, from April to September. When I first visited Runga, the Secretary General of LC1, Barole, helped with my research. Since Barole is Mugungu, research assistants from the Alur (Jenaro) and Acholi (Batista) were also employed as translators. As mentioned above, the village consists of five areas: Central, Mbegu, Agu, Nyamasoga, and Kakoma. Central and Mbegu are the first locations where people settled in the 1960s, with Mbegu expanding since the 2000s. In 2005, it was subsequently divided into Mbegu A and Mbegu B. To investigate the process of mobility in detail, I selected Mbegu A and visited all 130 houses there. During 2009, with the help of the research assistants,

unstructured interviews were conducted with 255 people to explore their mobility histories.

MOBILITY: FROM SUBSISTENCE TO EMANCIPATION

In the global context described above, villagers' livelihoods have been directly affected by decisions taken by central and regional government bodies. Below, I discuss how people have responded to these changes. Light fishing, cotton farming, and *abicamkani* are shown to be related to mobility and emancipation from government power. These practices can be categorised as 'trans-movement' over the borders of subsistence, ethnicity, and nationality, which are all related to the tasks of life. These activities were occasionally observed, and most are connected to everyday life dwelling. People survive by altering or manipulating their personal situation to emancipate themselves from central control.

I. Light fishing

After the fishing net raids from 2002 to 2004, many people began catching smaller fish using light fishing techniques. In 2002, however, very few people practised light fishing. Those fishers who did engage in the practice used landing nets, which are locally called *benchi* (Fig. 3). Fishers would place a lamp at the front of the boat and paddle offshore, where they would scoop the tiny and thin fish called *munziri*,⁽⁸⁾ measuring less than 4 cm, from the water using the *benchi*. In 2003, a new light fishing method using unregulated rampart nets was implemented to avoid harassment from the Fishery Department. Rampart nets are made from towels sewn together and edged with rope and corks that serve as floaters (Fig. 4). Such nets are generally too heavy to steal and are unregulated by the government. There are currently over 100 rampart nets in use, a rise from around 20 in 2003.

Lamp technology has also developed in the last decade. Fishers initially used pressure lamps, which are difficult to maintain and require special care to ensure proper lighting. In 2014, LED lamps were introduced, which require neither fuel nor spare parts, and have low running costs of around 1,000 UGX⁽⁹⁾ for solar power charging. These new lamps are much cheaper, easier to use in the water, and more durable against strong winds.

Using this fishing method, people catch *munziri*, dry them in the sun, package the fish, and then sell them to chicken feed factories in Kampala. Several contractors from Kampala purposely live in the village to purchase fish from fishermen. The villagers have demonstrated ingenuity in their transition from fishing for daily sustenance to commercial activities.

Since 2013, the Bafumbira in Runga have conducted business by selling *munziri*. The Bafumbira (singular Mufumbira) originate from Rwanda and were originally cattle-keeping people. They are also called the Nyamulenge in the DRC. In 2015, more than ten Bafumbira business owners in Runga had begun



Fig. 3. *Benchi*



Fig. 4. Rampart net

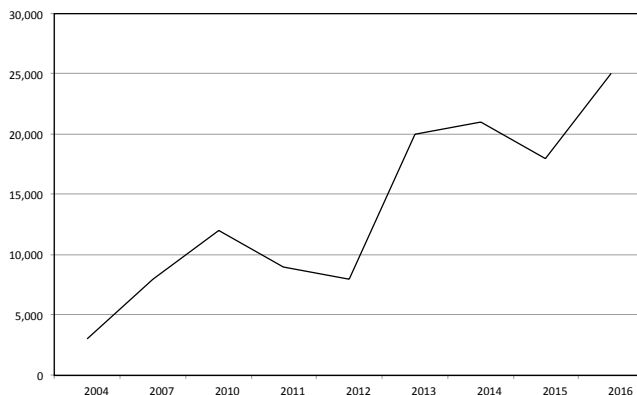


Fig. 5. The price of 1 basin of *munziri* at landing sites (axis: UGX)
 Source: Collected by the author and local research assistants
 Data of 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009 was not collected.

their own businesses. Fig. 5 indicates the average price of a basin of *munziri* at the landing site from 2014 to 2016. The price has risen around eight times, from 3,000 to 25,000 UGX, due to the increasing numbers of buyers and growing demand for *munziri*.⁽¹⁰⁾

II. Cotton Farming

From 2003, farming was introduced in the main Bararoo pastoral areas of Nyamasoga and Kakoma after the District Fisheries Officer advised the villagers not to solely depend on fishing. At that time, there was limited cotton farming activity in the area but by 2010, cotton production became so successful that 8 out of 10 cotton farmers could afford to buy second-hand motorbikes from their profits. Following the initial surge in cotton farming, by 2011 around 200 people were farming cotton, and cultivating approximately 1,500 acres of cotton fields.

Cotton farming is organised by two different groups in Runga, and each has a chairperson (Mr. P and Mr. R).⁽¹¹⁾ They contract with a cotton company named Olam International⁽¹²⁾ that supplies seeds, tractors, wires, and agrochemicals on loan. The land surrounding Lake Albert is loaned by the government and people can utilise it for communal purposes. The land is leased at 80,000 UGX per acre, in addition to an entry fee paid to the respective chairperson. After the harvest, people are required to repay the loan as well as one percent of the profit to the chairperson.

People in the village aspire to own a motorbike, an engine, new nets and even a new partner after the cotton harvest. In 2010, the suburb of Runga was mostly bush but due to the growth in the number of cotton fields surrounding the village, the landscape has been transformed by the activities to improve subsistence since 2011. From a dwelling perspective, the task is life, which includes dimensions of work and leisure. Indeed, as Ingold (2000: 199) writes

‘the landscape is the congealed form of the taskscape does enable us explain why, intuitively, the landscape seems to be what we *see* around us, whereas the taskscape is what we *hear*,’ the dreams of individuals and their subsequent labour have therefore changed the landscape of Runga.

Unfortunately, the 2011 harvest was disastrous. Although the harvest of cotton is assumed to produce an average of 1,500 kg and at least 800–900 kg per 1 acre according to farmers’ experiences in this area, locals explained that, ‘The cotton grew like tree with no fruit’ this year. For example, one respondent, Mr. B, only harvested 128 kg from four acres and sold the cotton at 1,200 UGX per kg, receiving a total of 153,600 UGX. However, his expenses amounted to 675,000 UGX for wiring, seeds, clearing, planting, shaving, and spraying, which resulted in a loss of 521,400 UGX. He even sold his boat for 140,000 UGX to buy agrochemicals. Another villager, Ms. A, harvested only 16 kg from four acres and sold the cotton at 1,000 UGX per kg, resulting in a total revenue of 16,000 UGX. Nevertheless, her expenses totalled UGX 1.6 million UGX. The cases of Mr. B and Ms. A are typical. Many individuals sold their nets and boats to maintain their cotton farms, only to be left with an outstanding loan.

Additionally, the roaming cattle in Runga cause tensions between the Alur cotton farmers and the Bararoo cattle keepers since the cattle eat cotton when it germinates. In December 2011, three Alur people were kidnapped from the cotton fields and murdered by Bararoo (Tahara, 2016). Moreover Mr. P left Runga in 2012 due to his embezzlement of the company, Olam International. Accordingly, people became reluctant to cultivate cotton and most farms disappeared by 2015. The villagers subsequently returned to fishing as a way to support themselves. People therefore demonstrate flexibility in their way of dwelling, which can be observed by the mobility of subsistence from the taskscape perspective.

III. *Abicamkani*

The last case connected to subsistence is called *abicamkani* in the Alur language, which translates to ‘I stay where I eat,’ and refers to independent and temporary work usually undertaken by younger women. Table 2 lists the occupations of the 255 people in Mbegu A.⁽¹³⁾ Most men (64%) are fishermen or other types of workers.⁽¹⁴⁾

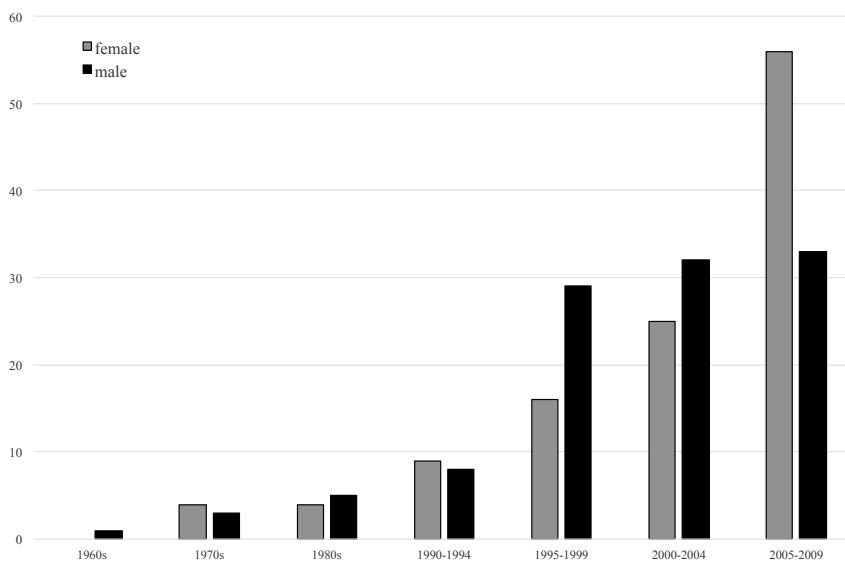
In relation to mobility and employment, it has been argued that ‘the marking of places and spaces by mobile men may be more imposing, compared to the mostly subtle and discrete mobility and presence of women, but men do not have the monopoly of seeking to tame and name the unfamiliar (Nyamnjoh, 2013: 658),’ indicating that mobility is not unique to men. Indeed, in Runga, most women are engaged in *abicamkani*, a phrase that succinctly describes how movement is motivated by the need to find daily necessities. *Abicamkani* takes on many forms, for example carrying fish to dry and packing into bags, buying fish on the landing site and processing them to sell at the markets, or buying dried cassava and retailing them on the streets of Runga. *Abicamkani* can also

Table 2. Occupation of villagers in Mbegu A (N = 255)

	Female (n = 130)	Male (n = 125)	Total
<i>Abicamkani</i>	77	1	78
Fisher	6	45	51
Fishery worker	0	45	45
Farmer	8	10	18
Fishmonger	8	8	16
Kiosk owner and worker	1	11	12
Firewood collector	9	1	10
Seller of foodstuff	10	0	10
Cook/owner of a small restaurant	4	1	5
Carpenter	0	3	3
Tailor	0	3	3
Clinic worker	1	2	3
Church pastor	0	3	3
Traditional birth attendant	2	0	2
Nurse	1	0	1
Video shop owner	0	1	1
Bar owner	0	1	1
BMU employee	0	1	1
Other	0	4	4

Source: Author interviews in 2009

Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

**Fig. 6.** The year of arrival at Runga (vertical axis: the number of people)

Created by the author based on interviews with 255 respondents.

In 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, the memory of people is vague, then I make 10 years as one category.

refer to when women and children of cattle keepers sell cups of milk from house to house in the morning. There has been an increase in *abicamkani* due to the growing numbers of women arriving and living independently in Runga, especially since 2005.

Indeed, Fig. 6 lists the year of arrival by gender for the 255 respondents in Mbegu A. It indicates that 16 females and 29 males arrived in 1995–1999, 25 females and 32 males came in 2000–2004, and 56 females and 33 males arrived in 2005–2009. Since 2005, therefore, more women have entered the village, with the main motivation being to engage in *abicamkani*. Furthermore, the development of transportation routes has also facilitated this movement. Introduced in 1997, the regular transport boat service is one feature that promotes individual mobility. One route is from Ndawe (Mukambo, DRC) to Runga twice a week, which coincides with the Ramogi market (Ndawe) on a Wednesday, and a large Sunday market in Runga run by the Congolese. The boat capacity is for 40 people and 20 Jerri cans. The Ramogi market is well-known for its palm oil. Also, new routes from Runga to Panyimur in the Nebbi District, and Nyawaiga to Panyimur were introduced in 2001.

The environment and infrastructure in Runga mean that it has become a place where women can independently sustain small businesses through different forms of *abicamkani*. Although *abicamkani* is a form of hard manual labour that requires significant effort and time, it does enable women to live free from the social bonds of hometown or husband relatives. This is an attraction for women who desire to be emancipated from such a restricted situation.

IV. Mobility as Emancipation

Few people were born in Runga. Most respondents stated the following reasons for their migration; moving with their parents or husband; staying after visiting relatives; looking for a job through personal connections; evaluating the conditions without any personal connections; wishing to see the Lake; forced to leave their domiciles due to a death in the family; escaping from trouble (court fines, family issues, etc.); visiting family and friends for a short time.

Other types of mobility are also practised in Runga. Emancipation from repressive central government policies can be achieved by manipulating their ethnicity and nationality. After regional policies were enacted to deter the Alur people from coming to the area, some began to use Banyoro or Bagungu names when visitors came from outside Runga. When national ID cards were implemented in 2014–2015, there were a few individuals who changed their name slightly to sound like they belonged to another ethnic group in order to better assimilate. This behaviour also applies to aspects of nationality. For example, some DRC citizens obtained Ugandan ID cards by expressing support for the NRM political party.

Therefore, people reconstruct their personal identities to emancipate themselves from national and regional politics designed to control them. The appearance of oneself can be manipulated by where we live, even if the move to that location

Table 3. Mobility of ancestral burial places (N = 114)

Burial location	Great-grand father	Grand father	Father
DRC	106	97	65
Uganda	6	17	35
Unknown/alive	2	0	14
Total	114	114	114

Source: Author interviews in 2009

is for economic reasons. Although it is difficult to elucidate acts of emancipation, there is one form of mobility that can demonstrate the manipulation of a sense of belonging. Table 3 details the mobility of ancestral burial locations in the DRC and Uganda. When questioned, some 114 people recalled the burial place of their great-grandfather, grandfather and father. The burial place of 106 great-grandfathers is in the DRC, while six are in Uganda. Some 97 grandfathers are buried in the DRC with 17 in Uganda. Finally, 65 fathers are buried in the DRC and 35 in Uganda. Since burial sites tend to be located near where individuals live, these trends suggest that the concept of the hometown has been altered based on the person's lifetime migration activities. There is a mobility of burial places, but it is difficult to state whether this movement is directly connected to a changing sense of belonging.

CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL SPACES AND MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES ON THE LANDING SITE

In this section, there is an examination of how social spaces are constructed and how different groups settled in the area. Faist (2013: 1639) claims that 'space is considered as socially constituted and may involve asymmetries and power, as reflected in social fields.' This phenomenon can be observed in Runga. Although the population includes 1,469 minors under the age of 18, who should have received basic education under Uganda's Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, there is still no government primary school in Runga. There are only religious private schools. There are government schools in other landing sites such as Kibilo and Butiaba, the villages adjacent to Runga. One reason for the lack of education provision is that the majority of residents are Congolese Alur from the DRC, whom the regional government regards as a mobile population.

I. Uncounted People

The name Runga is recorded on maps from the 1920s,⁽¹⁵⁾ though villagers' memories trace the origin of the settlement to the 1960s. Some 30 villagers were interviewed to explore the collective memory of Runga.⁽¹⁶⁾ In the early 1960s, people initially migrated to the area in order to fish but eventually settled

Table 4. Movement of people in Mbegu A (N = 255)

	2009	2012	2015
Remainers in Runga	255	177	155
Migrants from Runga		69	22
Returnees to Runga			25
Deceased		8	5
Missing		1	39
Total	255	255	246*

Source: Authors interviews (2009–2015)

* Please note that the 8 deceased and one missing case (2012) were excluded from the 2015 analysis.

permanently. Local administration was introduced in the 1970s, and the landing sites evolved into a village. In 1970s and 1980s, fish mongers are mostly Lugbara people from the north of Uganda. A market started by one Mugungu man under the big *Mutete* tree in the mid-1980s, including a fishing cooperative that encouraged trade with other villages. The fish trade expanded further after the Runga Market was moved to the present place and tendered by the government in 1992 and began collecting market due by the owner of the market.⁽¹⁷⁾ A parents' school, under the Catholic Church, also began in the village during the early 1990s. Due to the growth in trade, Runga developed from a small fishing post to a vibrant community in a relatively short period of time. The death of the fishery '*mulamansi*'⁽¹⁸⁾ in 1996, a priest who prayed for the success of fishery, an acceleration in the number of residents, and the aggravation of natural phenomenon led to poor fish catches and a decline in the village growth.

During the research, several interesting phrases were noted by villagers. For example, 'the UNHCR should register us, as most of us are refugees from the outside,' which was sarcastically stated by a Mugungu fisher, and 'people here are all criminals,' which was expressed by a Mugungu business person when referring to Alur people in the village. Interestingly, this sentiment was also voiced by Alur people in the homeland⁽¹⁹⁾ when talking about the Alur people in Runga. Not only the Mugungu, but the Alur and other ethnic groups repeatedly claimed that 'Runga is not our home,' 'here is only the working place and real home is not here.' These attitudes may accurately represent the situation of the Mugungu, since they are indigenous people who retain their home in the upper escarpment. Indeed, for some, Runga can be a challenging place to live. There are fatal cholera outbreaks almost every year, and there are daily quarrels, robberies, and even murders in the village (Tahara, 2016). Despite the Alur youth, who have never returned to the DRC, repeating similar statements, they have remained in the area.

Those who have left Runga at some point tend to return after a few years. Table 4 shows the movement of Mbegu A people between 2009 and 2015. Sixty-nine of the 255 respondents (27%) had moved out of Runga until 2012, but 25 of them had returned by 2015. This means that around a third of individuals had returned. Although there is a lack of comparative data, this suggests a high

level of mobility in the village. These people gave the following justifications for their return to Runga; ‘the village I had moved to became busier and I decided to come back here to work,’ ‘my relationships with others had become complicated,’ and ‘I came back to divorce my partner.’ It appears that the motivations to return were not just for survival, but more often related to comfort and personal relationships.

These people never registered as refugees or immigrants, as there are no immigration posts in the area. Further reasons for not registering were as follows: (1) they are the descendants of people who had moved to Uganda before it declared independence; (2) most movement is across the water rather than a land border; and (3) Runga is geographically isolated from the regional government of Hoima by the escarpment.

II. Migration Trajectories

In this section, the migration trajectories of people are described to examine how the social space was historically constructed on this landing site. From the total sample ($N = 255$), only nine people were born in the area, with the majority of villagers representing different generations of immigrants. Among the 255 people of Mbegu A, the Alur’s movement can be categorised into different waves of migration. As documented above, people migrate for a plethora of reasons including family migration, seeking employment or support from kin, or being forced to leave.⁽²⁰⁾ Fig. 7 demonstrates the trajectories of some migration patterns,

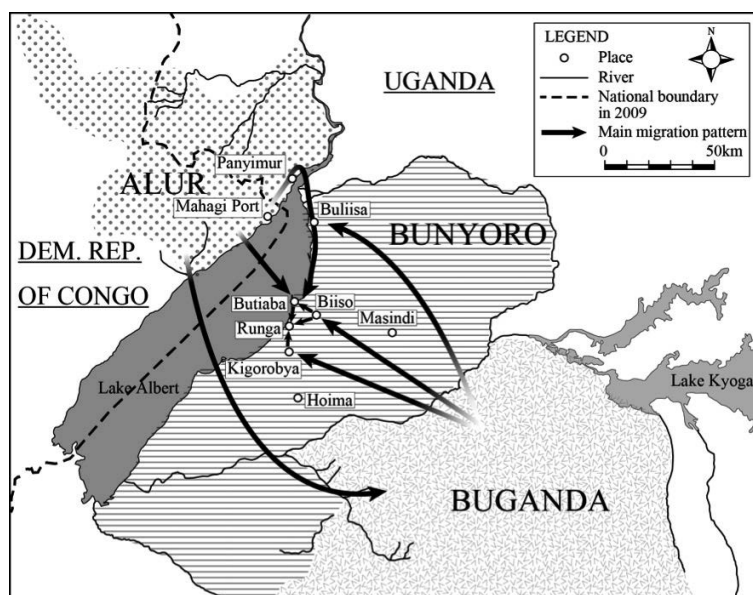


Fig. 7. Trajectories of people
Based on a map of Southall (1954–1970: 17) and a map of Nelles Verlag GmbH, Uganda, 2009

which are described in more detail below.

First, there is Pattern A. Their grandparents/parents migrated from one coastal village to another, and their descendants finally arrived in Runga in the 1960s and 1970s after escaping the Congo Crisis, commonly called the Mulele War. People of this pattern were the first migrants to land in Runga and they are mainly fishers. The first and second chairperson of Runga, who governed until 1977, and from 1977–1985 respectively, are included in this group. Next, there is Pattern B, whose parents or grandparents came to the Buganda region as migrant plantation labour for cotton and coffee in the 1930s and 1940s from Alur land.⁽²¹⁾ Subsequently, they tried to return home but stopped at the Bunyoro region at locations such as Biiso, Kigorobyia and Buliisa in the 1970s due to the turmoil in their Zairian hometowns. Furthermore, this group were evacuated away from Biiso ahead of the Ugandan Civil War in 1985, and moved down to the lakeshores to fish. Then, they finally arrived at Runga. The second or third generation of these families now live in Runga, such as the father of the sixth chairperson (1997–2002) of Runga as well as fathers and grandfathers of senior fishermen. The Ugandan Civil War in this area was called the Museveni Battle. One woman recalled how when she was in Biiso, carrying a baby on her back, she saw the bullets crossing before her and crawled in the bush to escape to the shore of the lake with her husband. Some of this group understand the Luganda, since they lived in the Buganda region with the parents during childhood.

Pattern C is the next migration trajectory witnessed in the Lake Albert region. In the 1950s, their parents or grandparents migrated to Butiaba, the colonial port town, to work for the launch of the sightseeing ship called *Merri* in Swahili. After a flood in 1962, this wave tried to settle in Biiso and Kigorobyia, but eventually went down to the lake to fish near Butiaba instead, and finally arrived in Runga in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This pattern includes some female and male elders, who have Runga-born children. The parents or grandparents of Pattern D migrated to Buliisa for farming and fishing in the 1960s. They returned to the DRC in the 1980s but came back to the lake area to fish during the 1990s and finally settled in Runga. These people were not traditionally fishers, but moved to escape the Congo Crisis. They returned to their hometowns after the war, but were forced to come back due to political turmoil and conflict. Elders and senior fishers are included in this pattern. Pattern E came to Kapaapi for farming in the 1980s and moved down to the lakeshore in the late 1990s. Most of this wave were economic migrants from the DRC and the West Nile region. Most Alur with family are included in this pattern, and the majority have secured land on the escarpment from the Bagungu through community meetings.

Pattern F reached Lake Albert's landing sites in the 1990s and 2000s. Commonly, this category migrated specifically to fishing. Nevertheless, there are two different types of migrants in this pattern. First, there are those who independently arrived for the purpose of fishing activities. Individuals and families escaping the Civil War in the DRC and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in northern Uganda are included in this wave. Some of these people

discovered Runga as fishmongers and boat transporters, then decided to remain for fishing since they had witnessed potential business opportunities. The second group are workers who accompanied fishers as supplementary labourers. Finally, Pattern G are individuals that were sent to Runga by their churches to propagate their religions. In Runga, a Catholic Church was established in the 1980s, the Church of Uganda was founded in the 1990s, the Pentecostal Church of Uganda began in 1992, and the Full Gospel Church was started in 2002. There is also an Entire End Message congregation, a mosque, and a Lamtekwar church, which is the Alur local religion from Panyimur. Priests, pastors, and trainees were dispatched by those churches.

In summary, people moved to the area to find employment as cotton and coffee plantation labourers, and to work in the shipping industry during the Ugandan Protectoral era. There were also significant influxes of people following Uganda's Independence (1962), the Congo Crisis (1964), the Ugandan Civil War in Biso (1984–1985), the LRA insurgency in northern Uganda (1986–2003), and the Civil War in the DRC (1997–2002). Such mobility is prompted by macro-level issues, but it can also be caused by personal motivations or the search for better living conditions.⁽²²⁾

Finally, the detailed movements of the leader of the pastoral people, who currently resides in the Kakoma area of Runga, is presented. Paulo was born in Kasese in 1925. Fig. 8 details his migration trajectory. Line A shows his movement from 1939 to 1947. He left Kasese in 1939. Since all of his cattle died due to disease, he migrated to Kaberamaido to work, where he tended other people's cattle with his uncle, mother, and sisters. They worked for Kumam people, taking care of 200 cattle and milking every morning. They sold gee

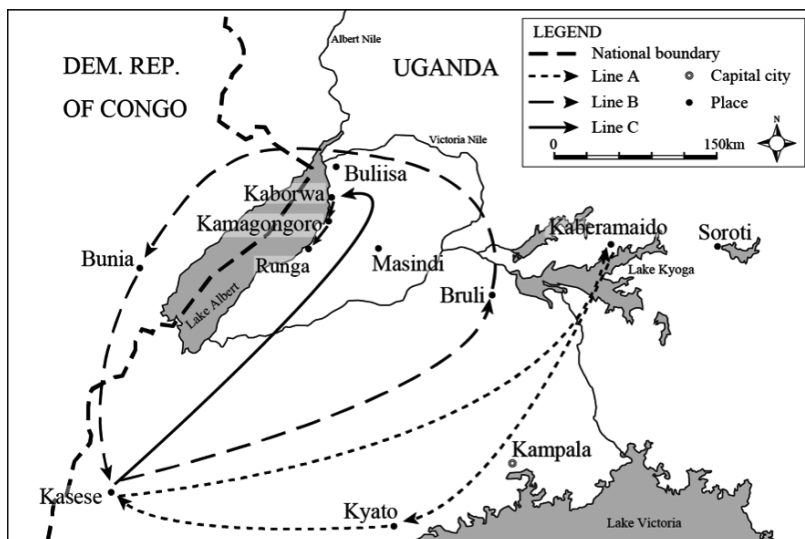


Fig. 8. Paulo's trajectory

Based on a map of Map Sudio 2007, East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda

from the milk daily and the payment for Paulo was one calf every year. He remembers that his boss, from the Kumam community, gave 80 cattle to the King of the Nyoro to gain protection from the battle and they moved to Kyato alongside Lake Victoria in 1947. Paulo and his family came back to Kasese in 1964.

Line B indicates Paulo's movement from 1979 to the mid-1980s. He went to Bruli near Masindi of the Nyoro region to help acquaintances, and then migrated to Kaikoo near Lake Kyoga of the Buganda region with 400 cattle in 1979. After three years, the war had started and the family's 400 cattle were raided by the soldiers of Tito Okello.⁽²³⁾ This meant Paolo had no cows and was alone. In 1983, he then went to a refugee camp in Bunia in the DRC. At the camp, he met a Nyoro man who had 80 cattle and took care of them. His two sons visited him while in Bunia and took him back to Kasese.

Line C indicates his migration from the 1990s until 2000. He was asked to take care of cattle in Kaborwa, the landing site of Lake Albert in the Buliisa district. The herd of cattle eventually increased and he was given 57 cattle by his boss. As his cattle were increased to 80, he moved to Kamagongoro and finally he decided to come to Runga in 2000, since friends that he had met in the Bunia refugee camp were already living there. As this example demonstrates, the leader's migration was principally driven by his task of cattle keeping. Searching for the best locations for his cattle was the key motivation to move, which occurred in the wider context of civil war. From a dwelling perspective, it can be argued that cattle keeping is his life.

People moved to the area with hopes of improving their livelihoods. Local villagers describe Runga as 'a place where they can only survive,' and explain that 'no one asks who you are, where you are from, and why you came.' These sentiments were shared among many villagers including the Alur, Bagungu, Bararoo, and other ethnic groups. Mobility can therefore create a diverse and heterogenic social space for everyone. By contrast, this was not the case in Buliisa where the locals expelled some pastoralists from the district in 2007 (Kajaga, 2015). This situation was caused by the decentralisation in the area. In 2005, the Buliisa district was created and the power, such as the LC, was monopolised by the Bagungu. By comparison, the Bararoo pastoralists remain together in Runga and collectively participate in the LC, although some disagreements have been noted (Tahara, 2016). Villagers also use the phrase, 'here is our Kampala,' which refers to the heterogeneity and variety of tasks permitted in Runga. One fisher said 'the taste of fish is excellent here, for they can bathe along the shore. Can you hear the sounds, *bongo, bongo*?' Although he is Mugungu and does not consider Runga as home, this statement conveys his positive and proud description of the village. Dwelling here has many aspects such as communicating with other ethnic groups, avoiding the direct control of regional and central government, and accepting the label of criminal or ill-omened by outsiders. Existing in this type of social space requires the constant capability to deal with such difficulties. Nevertheless, the villagers are proud of their dwelling.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the mobility of people related to subsistence, from the perspective of dwelling, has been drawn out. The concept of mobility is employed in a broader sense to understand villagers' everyday practices, such as spatial and social movement, changing forms of subsistence, and transforming ethnic and national boundaries. To explore the specific components and characteristics of mobility, the dwelling perspective was adopted to elucidate how an individual's tasks equate to their life.

In the first section, I described human mobility in a multi-ethnic and transnational village to understand how human beings can survive under suppressed conditions. When the government began to seek profit from the nation's fish resources, people's livelihoods conflicted in the political economy. As a result, villagers' fishing nets were burned from 2002 to 2004. At the same time, the rediscovery of oil led the indigenous Banyoro and Bagungu people to claim land and drive out Alur immigrants. After these incidents, fishing people became involved in light fishing and cotton farming. Though different, there are common features between these two industries operating in Runga. Indeed, the groups participating in fishing and cotton farming are similarly trying to work independently, manipulating a difficult situation to construct their livelihoods with extraordinary imagination. By employing the notion of mobility in a wider sense, people's attempts to transform ethnic and national borders, and manipulate their identities have been demonstrated. This not only improves their daily lives but equally sustains livelihoods. These mobilities are also performed in the hope of receiving conviviality, both emotionally and relationally, in the future.

In the second section, I teased out how the social space in Runga was constructed historically. For many generations, the people inhabiting the peripheral area between the escarpment and Lake Albert have never been counted as either citizens or refugees. The research found that migration flows are related to multiple social issues, such as colonial labour flows, political and economic crises in neighbouring countries, civil war and military insurgency. Individuals decide to migrate in search of a better place to live, depending on their way of dwelling. The majority of people persist in their everyday practices, and independently pursue their interests, in the hope of improving their lives. As Narotzky & Besnier (2014: S11) elaborates further, 'in many societies, people equate hope with displacement in the belief that geographical mobility may translate into social mobility, it is hoped, in the right direction.' Mobility connected to subsistence, therefore, has the potential to emancipate people from the repressive policies of central and regional governments.

Consequently, mobility creates social space, such as Runga, where everyone can move freely. This type of social space can accommodate a heterogeneous population and facilitates diverse activities, unlike areas where one ethnic group dominates. Mobility for the purposes of dwelling allows the restrictions placed upon individuals by their ethnicity and birthplace to be transcended. This kind of practice has the power to overcome boundaries, which is the origin of power within nation states, and limit political control. As mobility equates to hope,

life, and pride for people through their dwelling, it has the potential to challenge the authority of nation states and regional governments, which directly wield influence over the people through globalisation. Mobility is a flexible strategy for survival or a way to improve personal or familial conditions, and also the creation of conviviality.

NOTES

- (1) Oil was first discovered in the 1960s, during Obote's first regime, which was the Kyamwara oil well between Runga and Kibiro.
- (2) Faist (2013: 1644) points out that migration juxtaposed to mobility is one strategic research focus, stating that 'it is not only the categorization of people along nationality/citizenship and thus the accident of birth-place, but also their distinctions with respect to economic utility and social adaptation that make a difference to the life chances of many individuals.'
- (3) During Amin's regime in the 1970s, a type of local administration was introduced and this landing site evolved into a village. Then, Museveni introduced the Resistance Council (RC) for governing, which was succeeded by the Local Council (LC), the Ugandan system for decentralisation.
- (4) BMUs were suddenly dismissed during the presidential campaigning period in 2016 but LC1 members have been required to work for BMUs since 2017.
- (5) There are currently 985,000 Alur residing in Uganda according to the 2014 Census (Ethnologue, n.d. a), and 1,735,000 Alur speakers (Ethnologue, n.d. b).
- (6) Since 2002, it has been strictly prohibited to catch Nile perch that is under 18 inches long, which was increased to 20 inches in 2010. Using small mesh nets under 4 inches results in the catching of undersized Nile perch, which is considered illegal.
- (7) Some other fish do not grow as big as the Nile perch and Tilapia. These are species such as catfish (*Synodontis schall*), cattle fish (*Bangunus bayad*), and tigerfish (*Hydrocynus forskahlii*), which are caught for local consumption.
- (8) *Neobola bredo* in Latin.
- (9) 1 USD equated to around 3,300 UGX in 2016, and 2,500 UGX in 2004.
- (10) Environmentally, light fishing is not preferable for the preservation of fish. The District Fishery's Officer in the Buliisa District insisted on halting light fishing based on the scientific evidence presented at a 2007 meeting in Hoima (Tahara, 2017: 405–406).
- (11) Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of respondents due to ongoing disputes between the company and colleagues.
- (12) Olam International was established in 1989. It is a prominent agribusiness functioning in 65 different countries, supplying food and industrial raw materials to over 23,000 customers globally. The team of 70,000 employees has built a leadership position in many industries including cocoa, coffee, cashew, rice, and cotton, and the business consists of 44 different products across 16 platforms. Available at: <http://olamgroup.com/about-us/in-a-nutshell> (Accessed September 29, 2015).
- (13) The ethnic proportion of the sample is 225 Alur, 18 Bagungu, 3 Banyoro, 2 Mugungu and 7 from another ethnic group.
- (14) A small restaurant and kiosk are operated in the village but not by Alur. There is one Alur cook among four others, while only two Alur workers from 12 kiosk employees. These facilities are mostly owned by Bagungu business person, and they prefer to

- employ the same ethnic group. The job of the BMU employee is to maintain fire on the landing site during the night and to sweep the site in the morning after the fish have landed.
- (15) A map drawn in the 1920s by Roger Carmichael Robert Owen is in The National Archive in the UK (MR 1/1013/18). The name of Runga is written on the map along with Butiaba and Kibiro.
 - (16) When I first arrived in Runga (February 2001), I was employed by the Japanese International Cooperative Agency (JICA) as a temporary researcher for a poverty eradication project. I arranged a meeting to gain knowledge of the situation and gather opinions. About 50 people attended the meeting and 30 individuals recalled their historical memories.
 - (17) The market is up for auction every three months; the winner who bid the second highest price became the owner.
 - (18) *Mulamansi* is a Lugungu word that refers to a priest who prays for fishing success. The son of the former *mulamansi* subsequently undertook the work. He sacrifices hens, goats and sheep twice a year to banish misfortune from the Nile and Semliki Rivers. Misfortune includes cholera, wind, poor fishing, and lost and found. He prays for *Werindi*, which is the most powerful ancestral spirit, and *Karundu*, which is a spirit like air within the Rwensoga hills.
 - (19) The homeland of Alur is referred to as Alurland, where Southall (1956) drew a boundary, indicated in Fig. 7.
 - (20) Leopold (2005: 77) documents that diverse factors motivated people from the West Nile to migrate to Lake Albert during the colonial rule (1925 to 1961). As explained, ‘individual motivations for migration were always complicated. [...] Despite the clear effect of the combination of taxation and a lack of opportunity for earning cash in forcing people into migration, it is a curiosity of this kind of research that people seldom say they were forced to migrate to earn money for taxes: they say they quarrelled with their brother, or their father, or neighbours; that they wanted to see the big city, or their family did not have enough cattle to get a wife.’
 - (21) Alur land means the north-east of the DRC and the south of West Nile in Uganda.
 - (22) Apart from the Alur, as previously noted, the Bagungu and Banyoro also came to Runga for business reasons. Most decided to remain despite having no family. They do, however, have a home and family in their sending village in the upper escarpment, and return home periodically.
 - (23) Paulo regretted not giving cattle to Museveni (current President) in the bush at that time, as other people had.

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