

Chapter 7

Aspirations

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Plotting Development

Daudi brought out a large brown envelope and extracted a letter as he tried to explain the details of his land case. The letter was recent – dated two months before Susan first visited him that day in March 2011 – but the story went back about fifty years and was part of the bigger picture of development in northern Uganda. The conflict was between an institution, the sub-county, and the descendants of a man who had earlier gifted land to the institution in the name of progress and community benefit. The sub-county chief had written to Daudi's lawyer in Gulu, where the case was pending in the Magistrates' Court. In his letter, the chief wrote that Daudi's father Abaci had given land to the sub-county in 1976 and that there had been no objection to the sub-county's use of the land until 2008. When the sub-county plotted this land to sell to developers, it included a small piece that should have remained with Daudi's family; to compensate, the sub-county had promised to plot and survey the rest of Daudi's family land within the planned Town Board 'for the family future development'. The letter asserted that all this had been agreed in a meeting that included the family members, local leaders and elders. It denied Daudi's allegation that the sub-county had acted without his knowledge or that of the family members.

Daudi remarked dismissively that his father had already been dead five years by the time he was supposed to have given land to the sub-county. He kept repeating that the sub-county 'did everything by force' instead of informing him properly and discussing plans. 'I can't disagree with the development issue, but they're not taking the right steps.'

Daudi's father Abaci was a soldier. One of his nephews explained that he was an enlightened and visionary man. He had served in the Second World War and had travelled and seen new things. He wanted development for his home area, and his Palwa clan had plenty of land in and around the trading centre of Pacuk. So, in the 1960s, Abaci gave some land for a community hall; the building was used as a sub-county office and now is rented out as a video hall. In 1976, when new administrative units were delineated, his family gave more of their land to the Division, which later became the sub-county government. It may well be that Abaci himself was dead by then; Daudi said he was killed by Amin's soldiers in 1971. But people often refer to descendants by the name of a recently dead man. Abaci gave the land, according to several older people, by which they may have meant that some members of his family agreed to allocate land for the newly established Division.

Daudi was a child at the time. After his father died, he went to stay with his father's sister in Pader and grew up there, though he kept his ties to Pacuk. He came to visit from time to time; he had a hut on his father's land. Although he was the only son of his father, he had many lineage brothers who remained on Palwa land in the area. In the years he was away, the trading centre/sub-county headquarters became an IDP camp, and displaced people put up huts on his land. At one point, he received a phone call from the Salvation Army requesting permission to build two Early Child Development Centres (nursery schools) on his land for the many children in the camp. The condition was that the buildings would be his when the camp closed. So, when he finally moved back in 2008, he and his wife and seven children were comfortably accommodated in one of the large, well-built structures, while the other served as a store and shelter for his poultry and rabbits. The sub-county chief who took over from the one whose letter Susan saw in 2011 also took on responsibility for the case. In 2013 he showed Susan a thick file with letters from lawyers about the Abaci claim for 100 million shillings in damages. With irritation and some disdain, he remarked of Daudi: 'That boy has not grown from here, but from Pader. He came back here because he was attracted by the resources, the two ECD buildings on his land.'

Daudi, the man whom this (unpopular) chief called a 'boy', was referred to respectfully as *Ladit* or *Muzee* (elder, var. *Mzee*) by others. His lineage was large, influential and well-connected – even to members of the sub-county council with whom they were in conflict. One of Daudi's lineage brothers, Polycarp, came back to Pacuk in 2010 after working in Kenya for thirty-seven years; he must have left about the same time as Daudi did. Polycarp too declared his wish to see development and his resentment that he was not being compensated. He said that he had told the sub-county: 'We don't want you to leave. We also want to be developed. I may build a house or buy land for the young ones.'

What Daudi and Polycarp were struggling for was recognition and specific benefit from the development process in Pacuk. From our early visits to the sub-

county offices in the trading centre in 2010, we had been aware of the plans to transform the trading centre from an IDP camp with a few schools and churches to a Town Board with modern amenities, business opportunities and storied buildings. We had seen the impressive technical drawings, with prospective new roads lined with plots for commercial and residential use. The plans were afoot as the camp was closing in 2008, and by the end of 2009, the district had recommended the elevation of the trading centre to the status of Town Board. Pacuk was fortunate in having land on which to realize development and at the same time generate some revenue. Not all sub-county headquarters were in that position. But the sub-county land was encumbered in two ways: there were still displaced people – living and dead – whose huts and graves had to be removed before development could proceed; and there were claims on the land by the Abaci family.

There were three aspects of the development plans to which Daudi and his Palwa brothers objected: the new market, the new roads and the sale of plots. These were all located in the trading centre close to where Daudi and other Palwa lived. The market structure was inaugurated in September 2010; building must have started in 2008 or 2009. It was financed by USAID under NUTI (Northern Uganda Transition Initiative). It was to replace the old market in a cool grove of mango trees (ownership of that land turned out to be contentious as well, but that is another story). Daudi and Polycarp complained that the new market was on Palwa land and that no one had asked their permission. Polycarp told Susan: ‘Why not discuss? We also want development. Government should give us something and we transfer. I went to the lawyer and said I’ll collect the market fees. They are using my land while I’m sleeping hungry. Development I get from where? From them? I want money to construct a house.’ By the time Susan talked to Daudi and Polycarp, they could see that the market was a solid fact; they could not reclaim the land upon which it stood. But they wanted compensation at least. They thought their historical family rights over the area should have been recognized and that they should have a specific benefit by virtue of their descent, not just the general benefit that the new market might provide for everyone.

The opening of the new roads affected Daudi and other members of his lineage who had huts and graves in the roadway. Others had to move as well, but they did not have good grounds for objecting, since they were staying on sub-county land in the aftermath of displacement. In May 2010, a grader appeared to make two parallel roads that ended at the new market. Although the sub-county authorities claimed they had given notice in good time, the people we interviewed were bitter that they were not able to prepare properly. Exhumation required the sacrifice of a goat, which many people needed time to acquire. Daudi said: ‘The grader did things on force without informing people.’ He was unable to remove the bones of four of his brothers before the grader passed. It was not until August and September that he acquired the necessary goats and

reburied them on nearby Palwa land where his father's brother lives. One of his lineage sisters, a widow with six children, recounted how she returned from Gulu with the body of her child who had died in hospital there to find that her hut had been knocked down and her brother (a lineage brother to Daudi) had urgently removed the bones from two graves just before the grader passed over them. It was only afterwards that they killed a goat on the spot where the grave had been.

One of the new roads was named Abaci, and the other was named after a member of the sub-county council who had been instrumental in developing the plan. Polycarp remarked that 'roads are also development'. He wanted money to build a house on the second one and change its name to Palwa Road. For what was important about the new roads in the trading centre was that they were to be lined with plots for commercial and residential buildings. The sub-county marked off twenty-five plots and offered them for sale at 1 million UGX each. The condition was that owners must develop their plots by putting up permanent commercial or residential buildings. By 2012, all twenty-five plots had been spoken for, although not all buyers had completed payment. The sub-county informed them that they would have to pay 1.5 million if they did not finish paying by a certain deadline.

By early 2015, none of the buyers had been shown their plots. The court case brought by Daudi had not been settled, and there was an injunction on further development of the plots. The LC3 chairman was considering whether the uncontested plots might be given out at least. The plot buyers had formed a committee to pressure the sub-county to hand over their plots. The District Physical Planner pointed out another problem: the contractor with the grader had not followed the plan, so the roads were in the wrong place. By that time the new roads were overgrown in any case and were mere paths. The Secretary of the Sub-county Court Committee bemoaned the fact that a new road would have to be opened and the sub-county could not afford to hire a grader.

The matter of the case brought by Daudi had not been resolved. Many deplored the situation and the escalation involving lawyers and the district court. Lawyers were expensive, and the only way forward was to negotiate and agree locally. On that there was consensus. One of the potential plot buyers, who had given up and bought a plot from another family, said: '*Ladit* is stopping development. It needs to talk to him slowly slowly to make him understand.' Several senior men expressed their intention to talk to Daudi or to his lineage brother Polycarp. In 2013 the sub-county had organized a meeting with the Abaci family where it was decided to form a committee to work out a solution. But no meeting had been held by early 2015. The sub-county chairman claimed that Daudi and his brothers had come to him to say they wanted mediation rather than pursuing the case in court.

Polycarp complained about the poor communication: 'The politicians are the problem. The councillors are our neighbours. They are selling plots without

talking to us. They should give us a map for the township – give me half or something. But they cannot hear what I'm saying.' He blamed the sub-county for not inviting them to discuss the matter: 'They fear to call us. They are the beggar; we are not the beggar. We don't want this lawyer issue; we don't have money . . . We will only withdraw the case if the sub-county sits with us. But if we withdraw now, the sub-county wins.' Polycarp was also concerned that his brother Daudi was sick with tuberculosis; 'maybe he is affected by too much thinking.'

A visit to Daudi confirmed that he was indeed weak. He looked very ill as he lay on a sofa. His wife brought out his medical forms, which showed he was on standard treatment for TB and weighed 43 kg. He said that nothing had changed regarding the case; it was still with the Magistrates' Court. His lawyer had gone on study leave but assured Daudi that he could ring if anything happened. We did not stay long. Daudi had a friend visiting, a man who had earlier worked for the UN. On the table between them lay a book entitled *7 Ways to Financial Success*.

By the end of October 2016, nearly ten years after the original division of plots, six or eight people had been shown their plots, and one person had put up a building. The court case was still pending, which inhibited distribution of plots in the disputed area. The chair of the sub-county council was certain that they could win. After all, the district lawyer would represent the sub-county for free, while Daudi and his family would have to waste their own funds to fight the case in court. But the chairman did not want to pursue the court case while Daudi was so ill, perhaps not long for the world. The major protagonist on the side of the Palwa clan seemed now to be Polycarp, and he had been invited to join the new sub-county council on the seat reserved for the elderly. The council chairman was hopeful that Polycarp would convince Daudi and his lineage mates to reach an agreement for the sake of development. 'If you are a member of council and are against development, it's not good.' Other council members and a parish chief speculated that Polycarp's idea of development included improvement of his own family circumstances and that he would demand financial compensation. The chairman remarked that they could budget for that if the amount was reasonable. In other words, they could buy their way to a compromise so that the plot owners could finally undertake their commitment to develop their plots.

Three months later, in January 2017, the main change in the situation was that Daudi's health had improved after three months in hospital. His wife was expecting their tenth child ('and this will be the last', she asserted firmly). With his renewed strength, he was still pursuing the case. His wife remarked that Daudi's brothers supported him with words but not with money. She thought he might have to sell more land to pay the lawyer, as he had done initially.

A meeting had just been held about the allocation of the twenty-five plots. Daudi attended and expressed his bitterness. The Amin regime had grabbed his land, he said, and now his brothers were betraying him, wanting to settle with

the sub-county. Perhaps he was thinking of Polycarp, now a member of the sub-county council. Certainly, none of his brothers were present, so there was no support for him when the sub-county chief asked him to cool down and leave the meeting. The chief spoke calmly, inviting him to come to his office later to discuss the matter.

Of What Is This a Case?

The plotting of development in Pacuk, and the conflict that hindered the process, is one particular version of a story that was common in the Acholi sub-region in the decade that followed the closing of the IDP camps. With its details of surveys and plot divisions, graders and new roads, historical land gifts and current court cases, it is an illuminating extended case. We suggest that it is a specific instance of two more general interrelated phenomena. Daudi was making a claim on some land that his dead father had given to the local government long ago. The pattern of claiming land that forebears had given over to an institution is found generally in northern Uganda. At the same time, his claim is entangled with the efforts of local government to divide and sell plots of land in this small urban centre. So, this is also a specific case of the more general phenomenon of division and commercialization of land in urbanizing areas. Moreover, the case is a concrete example of some abstract principles. The concrete criticism that Daudi was blocking development is founded on an abstract principle that development is an absolute value, an ideal that must be pursued. The sub-county is promoting development through encouraging the sale of plots, while Daudi and his family also declare their belief in development. The case invites us to consider what development might mean generally and specifically. And when we ask the obvious question ‘development for whom?’ we may be led to intangible matters like trust.

This Land Is For Sale

When fighting broke out in the Acholi sub-region during the late 1980s, people in affected areas took refuge at churches, health facilities and local government headquarters. These were mostly located in small urban centres. Later, when government forced the entire population into internment, the IDP camps were established in trading centres, often the very places where people had already fled spontaneously. Once an IDP camp had been gazetted, all landowners, not only institutions, had to allow displaced people to build houses and stay on their land. They were not allowed to charge rent, although some who had agricultural land in the immediate periphery of the camp did realize some kind of gain from allowing displaced people to use it. Small trading centres like Pacuk (a pseudonym) underwent forced urbanization, as thousands were concentrated in a constrained

space. To the service institutions already located there were added facilities provided by humanitarian relief, such as the Early Child Development buildings put up on Daudi's land.

After the end of hostilities in 2006, and as the camps were decommissioned around 2008, displaced people were urged to 'return to where the war had found them'. Most left, but some preferred to stay on for various reasons (Whyte et al. 2013a). Thereafter, landowners could charge them rent, and the impetus towards commodification of land was thus encouraged. More important in that respect was the move by many centres that had hosted IDP camps to upgrade their status to Town Board or Town Council. Also, Gulu Municipality, where thousands had fled though it was never recognized as an IDP camp, upgraded to City status as its suburbs expanded considerably. These moves meant that land in urban and semi-urban areas increased in value (Büscher, Komujuni and Ashaba 2018). As in Pacuk, plans were made, plots were delineated and a lively market in land developed. Therefore, those with family land in or adjoining the centres found themselves in an advantageous position. One person remarked: 'A plot on the road is worth three acres in the village [rural area].' Likewise, institutional land, which very often lay in or near the growing centres, began to look more attractive.

Land sales were increasing throughout Acholiland, in part because the loss of livestock before and during the war left people with little else that could be exchanged for money. Land became a form of wealth (*lim*), like livestock, that had a potential monetary value. This commodification of land ran against the fundamental ideal of entrustment in Acholi culture. Ancestral land (*ngom kwaro*) is to be kept in stewardship for future generations, not sold. Money realized in land sales disappears quickly, while land remains as a basis for subsistence and belonging (Kusk 2018: 78). When people were being encouraged to leave the camps and return to their rural homes, leaders urged them to go back and secure their ancestral land and to avoid selling it. One announcement we heard even added that those who wanted to buy and sell land should do so in urban centres. There was no question that many political leaders saw the market in urban plots as desirable and necessary if small and larger urban centres were to develop (Meinert and Kjær 2017; see Lentz 2013: 223ff for a description of the tensions around division into plots in small urban centres in Burkina Faso). Thus, a contrast emerged between the ideals of entrustment and development. In urbanizing areas, land was most definitely for sale. The two ideals also implied a distinction between the near and the far future (Guyer 2007). The potential of urban plots for development gave them value within a more immediate time frame – a foreseeable future for yourself and your children. Entrusted stewardship of ancestral land was about a foreseeable future too, but it was also a matter of long-term value for generations yet to come (See Chapter 2 on the temporalities of transactions).

Claims on the Land of Institutions

When people today speak of how land was given away in the past (not sold, but nevertheless handed over) to new institutions, they attribute it to the desire for development. Daudi told how his father, who had travelled as a soldier and lived in southern Uganda, wanted development for his home area. A former sub-county chairman said wistfully, 'In those days our parents gave land for development.' A man involved in a boundary conflict with the local church said: 'Our grandfather gave this land for development. We have no problem with that . . . They were Christians. They thought if the church was here and the school was here it was good. Things like knowledge and land will help people after you die.' The case that opened Part III of our book shows this early commitment to development by way of the link between churches and schools. It also illustrates the desire to 'own' development; each party to the conflict wanted to control the school and the land upon which it stood.

People who have given land to institutions in more recent times also formulate their generosity in terms of appreciation of development. A man who gave land in 2013 for teachers' use at the neighbouring senior secondary school remarked that he gave land so the teachers could stay at the school. There was no written agreement; he gave it in the same spirit in which his grandfather had done so. It brought development close to hand. 'If development is coming, you need not be rigid. Instead of boarding a bus [going to the city], development is near.' It is noteworthy that in Adjumani and Lamwo Districts, where locals have given land for refugees to settle (for unspecified periods of time), they explain their willingness in two ways: first, the refugees from South Sudan are humans like us and we know what it is like to flee from war; second, the refugee settlement will bring development to our area. The chairman of Palabek Refugee Settlement told Susan that the Acholi Ugandans requested a refugee settlement because they saw the development that refugees had brought to neighbouring Adjumani District.

In a sense, the donation of land to institutions that will serve the community involves imagination of the near future – development should come here and soon – just as it does for those buying plots to build shops. The difference is that the benefit envisioned is for the more general good, not only for the advancement of one individual or family. While land is still donated, especially in rural areas where some kin groups have extensive holdings, it is extremely rare in growing urban centres today. Instead, the opposite is occurring; land once given is being reclaimed. It is as if the gift of embedded land could not be final; family members felt that they still retained some entitlements, just as Chauveau and Colin (2010: 98) showed that a land sale could be considered incomplete and challenged by a descendant of the seller in Côte d'Ivoire. Land disputes between institutions and local people occur all over Uganda, but the recent history of northern Uganda has provided especially fertile ground for this type of conflict, with the radical

changes that have occurred in the wake of the IDP camps (Whyte et al. 2014). The claims on institutional land are one important part of the story of plotting development in growing urban areas.

In some cases, the institutional land at issue was considered public or government land. It could be land upon which stood a public market, a health centre, a community hall or a local government building. In the case of Pacuk, the sub-county authorities claimed that local government owned an area within the trading centre. On this land, they had overseen the construction of a new market, and they wished to subdivide and sell another portion to generate income. Before doing so, they had to clear the land of displaced persons and the graves of those buried there during the war.

In other cases, land is held by non-government institutions such as churches and mosques. The Church of Uganda (Anglican) and the Catholic church have been landholders since the time of the Protectorate. They have constructed churches, health centres and schools on their land. During the war, they provided refuge for many displaced people, some of whom have remained.

The simple division between government and non-government institutions is more complicated when it comes to schools, as the case of ‘Claiming “Their” School’ demonstrates. Many schools were founded by Catholic or Anglican missions and churches on land they considered theirs. When the government took over the schools in the 1960s, it provided and paid the teachers and mediated donor funds for the building of new classrooms. It acknowledged the role of the church by recognizing ‘the foundation body’ and giving it the privilege of appointing half the members of the school management committee, including its chair. Thus, while the government provided the software (teachers and curriculum) and often some classroom blocks, the church provided the hardware in the form of land and the original buildings.

Generally, the conflicts over institutional land were of three types:

1. Descendants of men or families who donated land for projects of common good were asserting that the institution had taken more land than it was originally given.
2. People who settled on, or were using, land claimed by institutions refused to vacate or to acknowledge institutional claims.
3. Institutions disagreed between themselves over rights to a piece of land and the facility that was located there.

The conflict between Daudi and the sub-county officials was clearly of the first kind, as were other cases in Pacuk, including a dispute between the Anglican church and the families whose forefathers gave land to the church. Mostly these were boundary disputes; the claimant was seldom demanding all the land. Many of the second type were conflicts over timing; the settlers claimed they needed to

stay longer because they had nowhere else to go. But sometimes, as in the case of a leprosy facility no longer in use, they asserted their rights as settlers who had lived on the former institutional land for many years. The last type of conflict was illustrated by the case ‘Claiming “Their” School’, which opened Part III of our book. Because of the history of church-state relations around education, and the fact that the recognition of the foundation body had been withdrawn and then reintroduced, there were a good many cases of schools and school land that were claimed by both the Anglican and Catholic churches. As of 2018, in the Lango sub-region, there were conflicts over twenty schools, while another twenty had been settled.

Of course, there are other kinds of land conflicts between families and powerful organizations, some of which have been discussed in earlier chapters. In these too, the ideal of development is brought into play to justify land claims. National parks, an important source of tourism income, constitute very large land areas and are subject to several varieties of conflict (Chapter 9). Businesses such as the mining company in Karamoja (Chapter 8) or the wind turbine enterprise in Kaabong (Chapter 2) or Madhvani Sugar Ltd (Serwajja 2012; Mariniello 2015) acquire, or attempt to acquire, both large and smaller areas, in the name of economic development.

The cases to which we draw attention here differ in that they are located in urban centres and involve protagonists who know one another. Service institutions like schools, churches and health facilities are used by people in the locality, staffed by persons who usually live in the neighbourhood and with whom the disputants interact on an everyday basis. Daudi and his lineage brother and their families were well-connected with members of the sub-county council. In other instances, people refusing to vacate church land are members of the congregation, who pray together with those who are asking them to leave.

Land obtained by companies for business tends to be registered as freehold or leasehold. Forest reserves and national parks are gazetted by government, so their boundaries are formalized and publicized. In contrast, the claims against local institutions concern land that is often not titled. In many cases, there are no papers, no surveys and no mark stones to formalize ownership of institutional land. It was given at a time when land was abundant, and surveying was uncommon. Until the Constitution of 1998, land belonged legally to the government, so there seemed no need to register the land of government institutions. Most land held by the Church of Uganda, like the land in the case of ‘Claiming “Their” School’, was not registered, perhaps because the Anglican church had been close to government. (The Catholic church, in contrast, tended to formalize its landholdings.) Because of the many conflicts, district governments in northern Uganda have been encouraging both government and non-government organizations to survey and register their land (Whyte and Shroff 2017).

‘Development Cannot Stand on Air – It Must Stand on Land’

This assertion, which we heard many times, underlines the perceived necessity of land for development. It also reveals the image of development that is foremost in the minds of most people. Development is material. It consists of roads, markets and, most of all, buildings. In Pacuk, and in other growing small urban centres, the physical plans for development were posted in a public place where residents could study them. The drawings showed streets lined with delineated plots for commercial and residential buildings. In Pacuk, twenty-five of these plots were offered for sale by local government. But much of the land along the streets was owned by families, like that of Daudi. They too were encouraged (some said, required) to mark off plots and develop them. The demand that land in urban centres be developed figured as well in the case of Atim and Awor (Chapter 5). If they could not afford to do so, they were advised to sell off some plots in order to develop the remaining ones. Ideally, plots should be surveyed and identified with mark stones. But surveying and registering a plot as freehold is a costly and cumbersome process (Kusk 2018) – so much so that plotting and surveying Daudi’s family land within Pacuk Town Board was the compensation offered for the land he claimed. Most plot sales were not formally registered, and plots were not surveyed. But they were committed to paper and signed by witnesses. One man who was selling plots of family land within the Town Board emphasized that sales were not secret: ‘Land is sold by day, not at night.’

Land must be cleared in order to build. As one resident of Pacuk put it: ‘When development comes, those mangos at the old market will be cut down. Whether we like it or not, the trees will be cut. That is money. Development will cut them.’ Trees would be replaced by buildings. A man operating a vocational school in a prospective Town Board decried the lack of good permanent buildings. ‘In rural areas, it’s worse. We should also develop – put up structures, open schools like this.’ The structures envisioned were of fired bricks; evidence of brick production was everywhere. Indeed, the very land that hosted a new building might be the source of soil for making the bricks. A man making bricks on land he and his local church both claimed said: ‘Structures must be there for development. Whether it is for the church or not, structures must be built.’

Those structures are rectangular, in contrast to the round huts of the IDP camps and the circular Acholi houses that are still by far the most common after people moved back to their rural homes. Round houses have thatch roofs, while rectangular ones have corrugated metal (*mabati*) roofs. One spokesman for development in a Town Board dismissed poverty as a justification for thatched roofs: ‘Even a poor man can make a semi-permanent house of mud bricks and buy *mabati* so structures are not grass thatch like a village. Urbanisation cannot be there if people are living in thatch houses’ (Whyte et al. 2014: 612).

Plotting the Future

It was striking in Pacuk how often the word development was used in connection with land plans. The sub-county wanted to sell plots to those who could develop them. And it encouraged others who already had land within the projected Town Board to divide it into plots and develop it. If they could not develop it themselves, they should sell or lease it to someone who could. Daudi and his brother Polycarp both declared that they too wanted development, while many criticized Daudi for impeding it by filing a court case that dragged on and on. In the case of the claims on the school in Amati, the interest of the two churches in asserting claims to the land upon which the school stood had become 'a hindrance to development'. Development is invoked as an ideal, a goal, a motivation and a justification. At a general level, it is irrefutable; no one wants to be seen as against development. This unanimity is possible because 'development', its implementation and its beneficiaries are not specified, a point to which we will return. But for the moment we emphasize that development is seen as a significant value that should move people in connection with the disposition of land.

Development points towards a desired future. Whereas claims on ancestral land are often formulated in terms of past use, the keen interest in land is future oriented:

. . . when I talk to people about *why* land is important for them, the future potentials are central in informing their decisions and guiding them in their attempts to claim land, as are the negative potentials related to the enmity generated by wrangling. Therefore, a perspective on the future of land as people perceive it is highly relevant. (Kusk 2018: 53)

In order to unfold the cultural conception of development as orientation towards the future, we may borrow three concepts from Appadurai (2013): Imagination, Anticipation and Aspiration.

Imagination as an element of the everyday, Appadurai suggests, is fundamental in producing locality.

. . . especially in the lives of ordinary people, the personal archive of memories, both material and cognitive, is not only or primarily about the past, but is about providing a map for negotiating and shaping new futures. While state generated archives may primarily be instruments of governmentality and bureaucratized power, personal, familial, and community archives – especially those of dislocated, vulnerable, and marginalized populations – are critical sites for negotiating paths to dignity, recognition, and politically feasible maps for the future. (Appadurai 2013: 288)

In the Acholi sub-region, memories and remains of the conflict and displacement are fundamental for how people imagine land. Displaced people were forced to leave their land; landowners in the IDP camps were obliged to accept settlers on theirs. Deserted IDP huts and ‘graves in the wrong soil’ (Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon 2015) are the material reminders of land assumptions negated. People could no longer expect to bury their dead on their own land; they could be forced off their land and not even allowed to farm it. They could be crowded together on the land of institutions or other families. This kind of living provoked imaginations of moral decline and depravity (Mergelsberg 2012). Fears and suspicions emerged about whether their land might be taken by powerful outsiders. Then when security returned, land wrangles with intimate others added to the anxieties about land. So, part of the imagination with which people faced the future was unease about land.

Another part was visions of a different kind of life. For much as existence in the camps was a kind of ‘social torture’ (Dolan 2009), for some people at least it was a learning experience. Humanitarian workers and foreigners brought new ideas and practices: ‘. . . such vast, foreign presence influence[d] local ideas about “what it is worth having”, and what a good life could look like’ (Kusk 2018: 86). There were Early Childhood Development Centres, playgrounds, water systems, vocational schools and video halls. Small businesses and trade existed, despite the stringent restrictions. The camps were city-like spaces with ‘innovating frameworks’, but this was an ‘incomplete, unfinished form of urbanity’ characterized by waiting and liminality (Agier 2002: 337).

With the closing of the camps, the era of liminality and waiting seemed to fade as horizons of development opened. The efforts to achieve new urban status, the technical drawings of streets and plots, even the graders and the construction of new market buildings and local government headquarters sparked the imagination of a locality transformed. These memories of the camps and visions of urbanity and development constituted the personal, family and community archives that provided maps for the future.

Imagination provided grounds for anticipation – that is, figuring probable short-term futures. Anticipatory moves included making plans for the use of land, speculating on the value of land in favourable locations, preparing land for construction and taking steps to safeguard land. In Pabbo, which had been the largest IDP camp in the Acholi sub-region, landowners were keen to develop their land as upgrading to Town Council status proceeded. The displaced people had left, but the graves of those buried in the camp remained (Meinert and Whyte 2013; Seebach 2016). Landowners wanted to put up new buildings in the growing urban centre but were loath to construct on graves because the spirits of the dead might disturb the families of the landowners. Development and graves did not fit together. Efforts to persuade families to exhume and remove the bones left ‘in the wrong soil’ anticipated development in Pabbo (Jahn and

Wilhelm-Solomon 2015) just as it did in Pacuk. A contrary example appears in the story of Atim and Awor (Chapter 5), whose sister paid to cement their mother's grave on their plot in Pader centre in order to protect the land from development.

Land in an urban centre or on a road close to a centre assumed greater value. Owners of such land anticipated possibilities. A family with a piece of land on the outskirts of Gulu near the university main campus was struggling to keep it. They hoped to build a hostel so they could rent rooms to university students. Despite the unresolved conflict, they began to cut down trees on the land as fuel to burn bricks for the anticipated building (Kusk 2018: 181, 276). Daudi sold some of his agricultural land in order to fight the court case about land that could be plotted and sold in the new Town Board. Sylvia (Chapter 3) disputed fiercely with her brother-in-law about a piece of land on the road. Away from the road, there was plenty of land for common family use. Only the land along the road was divided and contested (see also Anying and Gausset 2017: 366). In another case, Kusk (2018: 276) sums up neatly: 'The disputed land is very small, maybe ½ an acre. It's not good for cultivation, now his father just lives there. It is next to the roadside, so it is a good area. If development comes, they can sell it or construct something.' Anticipation here is based on imagined development.

Appadurai asserts that aspirations towards a good life in future are just as much a part of any culture as are traditions and values rooted in the past. Wants, hopes, expectations and preferences may differ from one society to another, and he urges us to attend to images of the good life and the 'politics of hope' that mobilize towards its achievement. The catch is a point developed in an earlier work but neglected in *The Future as Cultural Fact*: the capacity to aspire is unevenly distributed. Capacity is like a muscle that must be exercised: 'capacity to aspire, like any complex cultural capacity, thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture, and refutation' (Appadurai 2004: 69). People with more resources have more opportunities to try out pathways to future aspirations; poor people, those in difficult circumstances, have fewer: 'part of poverty is a diminishing of the circumstances in which these practices occur' (ibid.).

For nearly twenty years, as the LRA war dragged on, circumstances did not permit most residents of the Acholi and Lango sub-regions to pursue their aspirations for development. When peace came and the IDP camps were closed, the ideal seemed more reachable. But there were differences in capacity to aspire. The sub-county office in Pacuk exhibited beautiful drawings of the future Town Board; they negotiated with donors for electricity and new roads. They were able to draw on support from the District Planner and from the Faculty of Technology at Makerere University (Whyte et al. 2014: 610–11). Daudi and his family had resources too. They sold land to hire a lawyer and file a court case with the District Magistrate. They had visions of development, and they were able to pursue their aspirations. Most residents of the centre shared the aspirations,

even though it meant that they had to leave the land they had been occupying. However, only a minority of them had the capacity to practically pursue the goal of development. They had neither the resources to buy plots and put up buildings, nor past experience of successfully pursuing aspirations for development. It was striking that many of the plots being sold went to people originally from the area but currently living and working outside of the growing centre. Two of the plots sold by a family with land in the centre of Pacuk were bought by soldiers who were serving in Somalia. In the same way, the sister of Atim and Awor, who was working in Soroti, felt that she should have the land in Pader Town Council because she had the money to develop it by constructing a permanent building and had gone to court to fight for the land (Chapter 5). Her capacity to aspire was greater.

The case of Stephen Langole, which opens Chapter 1, is a frank example of imagination, anticipation and capacity to aspire. He imagines the post-conflict condition of land sales and insecurity of tenure. He anticipates that acquiring private land in different locations will provide insurance against land greed. He has the capacity to aspire to personal development through land purchases, in terms of financial resources, connections, knowledge and experience – even though his pursuits are dogged by conflicts and obstacles. His plot in Gulu town (Land 3), for example, was an anticipated investment, which he wanted to develop by putting up a structure. The effort was partly hindered by the development plans of Uganda Railways Corporation, but if URC takes his land by compulsory acquisition and pays compensation, his investment will prove sound. The many land wrangles in which Langole is involved suggest that although his capacity to aspire is strong others have aspirations that may clash with his. There may be coincidence or contradiction between individual and collective development plans as the matter of the Uganda Railways land survey reminds us.

Conclusion

Development is a general ideal that has nearly unanimous support in post-war Acholiland. But the particulars are problematic. Development how? Development for whom? In Pacuk, Daudi and his brother Polycarp put it clearly. They were not against development for the community, but they also wanted it for themselves and their own children. As Polycarp said to the sub-county council: ‘We don’t want you to leave [the land]. We also want to be developed. I may build a house or buy land for the young ones.’ Simply speaking, development may be for the individual, the family or ‘the community’ – although community always means some and not others (M. Whyte and S. Whyte 1998). Often development of an individual brings growth to a family; at least that is the family’s hope. A community development project initiated by a family may advance both. One man in Pacuk, who was running a vocational training school on (what he claimed

was) family land, asserted that his target was to help the community but added that it would also help his family.

Often enough, community development is at odds with family and individual development. If institutions such as schools, health centres and local government are considered communal, then the many cases of reclaimed formerly donated land show such contradictions. Community institutions can also oppose one another in their aspirations, like the Catholic and Anglican church communities in Amati; this hindered development of the local community and thus children's education suffered.

Our TrustLand project has assembled a multitude of cases where families oppose families and individuals oppose intimate others. Sometimes both parties to a land wrangle have aspirations for development; sometimes one wants to develop (construct a building) or sell a piece of land while others want to keep it in trust for children and grandchildren. In the case of 'A Disputed Land Sale', which opened Part I of this book, Elisabeth declared that the plot on the outskirts of Gulu town was to be kept for her grandsons, but her daughter Grace sold the land without her knowledge and used the money for a permanent structure on the land where she was staying.

That an individual's development can be impeded by family needs or aspirations is abundantly illustrated in Stephen Langole's case. He declares that he wants 'to possess private land free from any other claims even from people who are intimately close to me like my wife and children'. Yet there are family entanglements on five of the six pieces of land he claims. He got the land through kinship connections – through inheritance or on the recommendation of a relative. He allowed family members to use the land – to live, to run businesses, to graze livestock and even to build a house. He concludes that private landholding is almost impossible in practice; constant negotiation and accommodation are necessary. He cannot rely on anyone: 'My experience, based on the way people who are intimately connected to me contest my ownership and control of land, demonstrates the difficulty in trusting anybody on matters of land.'

Trust is obviously a necessary element of entrustment; stewards must be reliable, responsible and faithful to the common agreement that land should be protected for future generations. But trust turns out to be a key issue in development of land as well. Do people keep their word when they promise to vacate land should the owner want it for development? Can a buyer trust that the seller is the legitimate representative of the owners? Will money allocated for a development project be misused?

We have argued that trust cannot be taken for granted in northern Uganda. It is tentative and must be proposed and reaffirmed over time. It is through consultation and communication that this can happen, as was clear in the case that opened this chapter. Daudi and his brother Polycarp repeatedly complained that they were not recognized; that the sub-county did things without their knowl-

edge. They wanted discussion, they wanted to be appreciated through compensation, to be acknowledged and included in the plans for Town Board development.

Communication and consultation do not in themselves create trust but are a step in the right direction. Including Polycarp in the sub-county council was a positive move that at least proposed some kind of trust. The opposite, lack of communication, provides fertile ground for mistrust, as Kusk (2018) has shown in her study of land wrangles with intimate others. Even in conflicts about larger development projects, such as the Madhvani sugar cane plantation, the mining project in Moroto, and the wind turbine in Kaabong, complaints are made that investors did not consult and negotiate directly with local people. Development as locally imagined, as anticipated, and as an aspiration must be specified, discussed and debated continually if a modicum of trust is to be ensured.

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