

CHAPTER 9

The Anthropology of Forced Migration in Africa

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FORCED MOBILITY IN ANTHROPOLOGY'S AFRICA: HISTORICALLY CENTRAL BUT THEORETICALLY INVISIBLE

Few processes are more closely associated with Africa's current political and socio-economic predicaments than displacement and migration. At the turn of the millennium, over 40% of the world's major armed conflicts were taking place in Africa (Gurr et al. [2000](#)) while the continent was estimated to contain over 30% of the world's refugees and over 60% of its internally-displaced persons (IDPs) (Crisp [2005](#)). Even more recently, media images of thousands of Africans attempting to cross the Mediterranean in disastrously overcrowded boats have drawn global public attention to how migration is part of a desperate effort to cope with the human precarity resulting from failed development, ecological crisis, and violent political turmoil – even as this strategy exposes them to other perils, resulting from the ever more far-reaching securitization regimes, bent on preventing them from reaching destinations in the Global North (Carling 2002; Carling and Hernandez-Carretto [2011](#); Kleist and Thorsen, [2017](#); Landau forthcoming; Lucht [2011](#)).

African migration may only recently have gained greater public visibility, but it has long been a transformative force in Africa linked to a long history of incorporation into successive geo-political systems of global domination and exploitation – including early European expansion, followed by colonialism, and more recently international development and humanitarianism. As early as the fifteenth century, Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator established the “Casa da Mina e Tratos da Guine” in 1486 (Saunders [1982](#), p. 8) in order to monopolize the trade in enslaved Africans for purposes of financing what was then a still incipient European expansionist vision. By the heyday of the slave trade in the mid-eighteenth century, the expansion of global capitalism had come to rely on African labor as the central factor of production in a global system of trade and imperial competition that would ultimately weave the foundations of the modern world as we know it. By the time it ended in the mid-nineteenth century, the transatlantic slave

trade had forcibly removed more than 10 million Africans from the continent (Curtin [1969](#); Miller [1988](#)). Anthropologists such as Shaw ([2002](#)) and Holsey ([2008](#)) have argued that many current forms of African social organization and political practice still bear the imprint of the slave trade's massive social trauma. Throughout its history the trade directly underwrote the rise and fall of major African polities in West Africa and along the Swahili coast in east Africa, and contributed to waves of conflict among various African communities in southern Africa (known as the *Mfecane* or *Difaqane*, which literally means “coerced migration”) and effected social and political change as far north as the Rift Valley.

Historians more so than anthropologists (Ranger 1993), have examined how this “deep history” of displacement, and especially the slave trade, set the stage for subsequent forms of colonial exploitation across Africa that also relied upon or resulted in forced migration. In places as diverse as the Congo basin of central Africa (Hochschild [2006](#)), across much of west (Cordel, Gregory, and Piche [1996](#)) as well as and east Africa (Cooper [1983](#)), and throughout the southern region's white-settler states (Harries [1994](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Murray [1981](#); Negrão [1995](#)) colonialism relied heavily upon systems of compulsory labor and migration. This was particularly the case throughout the southern African region where white-settler colonialism, together with capitalist investment in high value resource extraction, began to transform the region into a labor reserve for South African mines (and, later on, for industry and related service industries) even before the Berlin Conference (Crush et al. 1991, First [1983](#); Harries [1994](#); Isaacman [1996](#); Murray [1981](#); Negrão [1995](#); Ranger [1967](#); Vail and White [1980](#); Van Onselen 1976). This extractive (of resources and labor) project not only involved forcible dispossession of land which generated massive displacements (Alexander [2006](#); Ranger [1967](#), 1993), but also used various combinations of taxation, indirect rule through native authorities, wage and price controls, policies of racial and gendered residential segregation, and colonial borders to compel Africans (men in particular) to participate in massive circular labor migration schemes. From the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century these labor migration systems of regional scale not only economically sustained and politically enacted the colonial project but also profoundly re-shaped African social institutions, transforming gender and inter-generational relations, household economic and subsistence strategies, religious beliefs and institutions, and the organization of political authority (Comaroff [1985](#); Vail and White [1980](#)). Labor migration also launched massive urbanization (Cooper [1983](#); Ferguson [1998](#)).

Yet despite the centrality of mobility to the colonial project (Ranger 1967, 1993, Young [1994](#)) and the seismic shifts it was effecting in African societies, Africanist anthropologists paid

virtually no attention to migration as a research question throughout most of the colonial era (but see Schapera [1947](#)). In large part, this neglect reflected the dominant structural-functionalist school, whose primary unit of study was taken to be the “tribe” – thought of as a largely self-contained system in which social relations, place, language, and culture coincided – and in which the primary theoretical “problem” was that of identifying how relatively “uncontaminated” institutions (kinship, religion, household subsistence) were integrated in ways that reinforced each other and thus (re)produced social order. Labor migration, for example, which would have highlighted the centrality of conflict and disruption over order and continuity – and the inevitable role of “external (colonial)” forces in shaping “local institutions” – fell largely outside of this brand of anthropological theory.

Manchester School scholars (such as Gluckman [1961](#)) urged research on contemporary realities (such as urban migration) but, in accordance with the structural-functionalist perspective, viewed urbanization as evidence of “destabilization” of social and cultural forms or as a process of “detrribalization” (being the other side of the coin of “modernization”) (Mayer [1962](#); Wilson, [1972](#) ; Wilson and Wilson [1968](#)). In this perspective, urbanization was seen to replace one whole set of social relations for another one entirely (Watson [1958](#)). The influence of this theoretical perspective can be seen in the formulation of one of the very first efforts to make generalizations about forced migrant behavior, in which Scudder and Colson argued that the displaced could be expected to cope with the traumatic loss of vital resources (such as social networks and leaders, material goods and economic possibilities, institutions, and even cultural symbols) by pursuing “culturally conservative strategies” – characterized by an effort to minimize the extent of change in social practice:

Following removal, the majority of relocates, including refugee can be expected to follow a conservative strategy. They cope with the stress of removal to an unfamiliar habitat by clinging to the familiar and changing no more than is necessary ... one major strategy is the transfer of old skills and farming practices to the new habitat. Another is to attempt to relocate with kin, neighbors and co-ethnics so as to recreate the security of an encompassing community with familiar institutions and symbols ... in clinging to the familiar, relocates attempt to move the shortest distance, not only in space, to remain in contact with a familiar habitat, but also in terms of the psychological and socio-cultural contexts of their lives ... post relocation conservatism in economic activities is also apparent ... Scudder (1973) has labeled this stance a process of cultural involution. As a coping strategy it appears analogous to strategies used for dealing with grief after the death of a loved one ... so long as this strategy predominates the majority of those relocated will avoid both old and new activities that involve risk and hence might increase still further levels of stress ... people tend to behave as if during transition a socio-cultural system were a closed system.

(Colson and Scudder [1982](#), 272–274)

Arguing that the displaced would tend to minimize change and restore pre-existing social forms, this approach largely neglected those who might actually embrace the changes wrought by displacement and disruption. If groundbreaking as one of the first sustained efforts by anthropologists (not only in Africa, but anywhere) to focus on displacement, this work nevertheless clearly brought the theoretical concern of structural-functionalist assumptions and concerns to bear in framing and pursuing this task.

By this time however, the cracks in this theoretical paradigm were becoming more and more evident. The fact that many African migrants were observed to maintain links with their areas of origination, and to circulate between these and urban destinations, increasingly strained the capacity of the structural-functionalist paradigm to adequately explain social existence in either rural or urban areas, or the forms of migration that linked the two. Clyde Mitchell's (1969, [1971](#)) investigation of "tribalism" amongst African migrants in urban settings is representative of the shift that began to occur throughout the 1960s as anthropologists working in Africa finally ushered migrants and migration into their analytical frames. Rather than seeing tribalism as the apex of a form of extended kinship that operated as a system of deterministically prescriptive norms for defining social interaction, Mitchell highlighted how tribal identity in urban settings operated as one form of social ascription – amongst many other types (age, class etc.) – that could

be invoked to explain/frame interaction or organize social affiliation. There was, thus, a shift towards historical investigations of “ethnicity” constituted by and through a range of complex interactions with, and – in many cases – as effects of colonial rule itself (Comaroff [1985](#); Comaroff and Comaroff [1987](#); Meillasoux [1981](#); Ranger 1967; Southall [1970](#); Vail and White 1980, 1991) – including the violent displacement and labor migration regimes that colonialism had engendered.

Since the 1960s, Africanist anthropology has remedied its earlier inattention to migration, particularly amongst those scholars focused on urbanization, urban social organization, and the role of hometown associations in organizing circular migration and urban/rural connections (Epstein [1961](#); Hart [1988](#); Little [1957](#), [1965](#); Geschiere et al. [1998](#); Gugler [1971](#), [1997](#), [2002](#); Gugler and Geschiere [1998](#); Trager [1998](#), [2001](#); Whitehouse [2012](#)). A much larger number of studies have remained attentive to migration and addressed the influence of migrants on other anthropological concerns, without necessarily focusing specifically on studying migrants as migrants, or crafting theories of migration. Notable works in this vein include: Bledsoe’s ([2002](#)) study of cultural conceptualizations of fertility, reproduction, and child fosterage strategies in West Africa; Trager’s ([2001](#)) and Mercer, Page and Evans’s ([2008](#)) studies of local community development strategies; Cliggett’s ([2006](#)) analysis of kinship-based famine-coping networks and remitting behavior in rural Zambia; Hansen’s ([1997](#)) examination of gender politics and participation in Lusaka’s informal economy; Ferguson ([1998](#)) and Piot’s ([1999](#)) examinations of situated engagements with the clashes between the charter mythologies of modernity and the constraints of neo-liberal political-economic orders; Geschiere’s (2009) query into rising tides of xenophobia and the growing resonance of discourses of autochthony; and De Bruijn’s (2007) examination of the relationship between mobility in areas of marginal state power in the sahel. Meanwhile, there has been one area of anthropological research in Africa that emerged in late 1970s and has grown ever since in which mobility has remained front and center, namely in the study of refugees and other forced migrants. The remainder of this chapter will review this work, highlighting anthropological research in Africa that featured prominently in creating and orienting the new interdisciplinary field of Forced Migration Studies.

The aforementioned work of Elizabeth Colson’s aside, the first anthropologists to focus on refugees and forced migration engaged more with problems in policy than with anthropological theory.

As noted by Zetter ([1988](#), [1991](#), [2008](#)); Hyndman (2000); Loescher (1993), and Polzer and Hammond ([2008](#)), and Crepeau et al. ([2006](#)), the study of forced migration has tracked changes in an international refugee protection regime, initially founded after World War II to deal exclusively with war-dislocated populations in the European context. However, the “institutional roots” of refugee studies include more recent developments: the founding of the first major refugee studies center at Oxford University in 1985 (by anthropologist Harrell-Bond) which inspired the founding of other similar institutes, such as in Nairobi, Cairo, and Johannesburg; the launch of the *Journal of Refugee Studies* in 1988 and the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration in 1994. To the extent that the work of key anthropologists such as Barbara Harrell-Bond not only resulted in landmark research but also involved the development of degree granting graduate programs at major international universities, sponsored research programs, academic journals and major conferences – their strand of intellectual concern with migration arguably exerted the most influence in charting Africanist anthropology’s engagement with forced migration over at least the last four decades.

In the section that immediately follows (Populations: From Refugees to Displaced in Place) I plot how Harrell-Bond and other anthropologists shaped the scope of the field through works that insisted on critically questioning the categorizations used by policy-makers to distinguish and demarcate the displaced from other migrants. The section that then follows (Problematics: Social Differentiation and Transformation) shifts in focus to track the some of the key problematics that Africanist anthropologists have explored as they have studied all of these different forced migrant populations, including social differentiation and social transformation. The final section of this review briefly discusses some of the ways in which the anthropological study of African displacement has set the stage for new directions in Africanist anthropology. This is particularly apparent in its work on global displacement diasporas and through its contributions to the understanding of wartime social existence and change. These contributions are also seen in debates about agency and the theorizations of change which are of broader import to anthropology as a discipline.

POPULATIONS: FROM REFUGEES TO DISPLACEMENT IN PLACE

Setting the stage: recognizing camp refugees

A landmark, Harrell-Bond's pioneering and detailed study of Sudanese refugees detained / "protected" in United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps in Sudan (Harrell-Bond [1986](#)) became a "charter text" that plotted the course for a then-emerging field of refugee studies/forced migration as a whole. Her book, *Imposing Aid*, broke new ground by shedding critical light on a what was at that time, for Africa, a rather novel and entirely unstudied social phenomenon – that of the camp-interned refugee. As the first influential study to render camp refugees empirically (and politically) visible, *Imposing Aid* set the stage and plotted the initial course for the study of displacement in Africa in several ways.

For one, it set a high standard for empirical ethnographic research on refugees that inspired many researchers to follow in its wake. Harrell-Bond's work focused on multi-ethnic populations whose experiences of violent uprooting and forcible resettlement in contexts of modern war and international intervention seemed to represent almost the opposite of the pristine, stable, culture-bearing units that Africanist anthropology had been accustomed to seeking. *Imposing Aid* ushered in a wave of studies of refugee camp populations that set the dominant course for refugee studies as an interdisciplinary field, establishing a major line of research that continues to attract significant anthropological research in Africa to this very day (e.g. Agier [2011](#); Beswick 2001; Callamard [1996](#); Gale [2007](#); Horst [2006](#); Oka [2014](#); Malkki [1995a](#), [1995b](#); Turner [2010](#)).

Harrell-Bond's work was also particularly important in turning the humanitarian regime itself into an object for critical inquiry. In *Imposing Aid*, she highlighted how competition amongst international humanitarian organizations undermined their effectiveness in providing assistance and often placed them at odds with the priorities as defined by refugees themselves. In damning detail, she documented how, in the worst-case scenarios, international assistance could even accentuate the plight of those whose conditions it strove to ameliorate. The critical analytical stance towards the humanitarian regime that *Imposing Aid* so vividly introduced remains to this day a staple of work in the field – anthropological or otherwise (Bakewell [2008](#); De Waal [1997](#)), also revisited in the last decade by Harrell-Bond herself in her co-authored work with Verdirame, *Janus-Faced Humanitarianism* ([2005](#)).

Even more broadly, *Imposing Aid* pioneered an analytical approach that sought to critically examine policy categories in order to expose their political underpinnings and their impact on the lives of the displaced. Following her lead, anthropological work in this vein has continued to reveal how many key policy distinctions that play a fundamental role in organizing the

international refugee regime and the assistance they provide fail to reflect the lived realities of forced migrants, often because of their underlying and overriding concern with guaranteeing the rights and prerogatives of states and/or the concerns of international aid organizations themselves (Agier [2011](#); Bakewell [2008](#); Cernea and Guggenheim [1993](#); De Waal [1997](#); Harrell-Bond [1986](#); Lubkemann [2005](#); Polzer and Hammond [2008](#); Verdame and Harrell-Bond [2005](#)).

The category of “refugee” itself was amongst the first to be critically scrutinized in this respect, particularly for its use by governments and humanitarian aid organizations to “filter” migrants, so as to limit legal responsibilities for protection and assistance. Anthropologists working in many different war-affected contexts in Africa have thus critically scrutinized policies that restrict the assignment of legal refugee status to those deemed to have moved for “political” (rather than “economic”) motives. The analytical fallacies – and political uses – of this distinction are rendered most obvious in situations in which the violent destruction of a population’s means for securing its economic and subsistence activity has become a tactic of war or a tool of political control (De Waal [1997](#)). Thus, for example, Ethiopia and Sudan provide notable – and well documented – cases in which governments have forbidden the distribution of food aid within insurgent areas in an effort to starve populations who might be harboring enemy troops.

However, political conflict and violence can also generate economic hardship that drives mass migration through other less direct – but no less consequential – mechanisms. Thus, throughout the 1980s, hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans could not avail themselves of typical drought-coping strategies because different warring factions held urban and rural areas during the civil conflict. To describe those who eventually crossed international borders to escape the scourge of drought (Black [1998](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#)) as “environmental” or “economic” refugees, obscures the ways in which the broader political dynamics of war prevented the use of well-established social strategies for coping with environmental volatility.

Anthropological insights on how political and economic conditions intertwine to underwrite displacement, remain highly relevant to discussions about forms of African mobility in response to new forms of crisis – including the mounting concern of policy-makers and humanitarian activists with Africa’s growing number of “environmental refugees” (Homer-Dixon [1991](#); Homer-Dixon and Percival [1996](#); Kolmannskog [2009](#); Myers [1997](#); Myers and Kent [1995](#); Piguet [2008](#); Piguet, Pécoud, and Guchtenère 2011). Echoing earlier critiques of categorical distinctions between “political” and “economic” migrants, anthropologist Stephen Castles incisively notes:

The term “environmental refugee” is simplistic, one sided, and misleading. It implies a mono-causality that very rarely exists in practice...and it does little to help us understand the complex processes at work in specific situations of impoverishment, conflict, and displacement. This does not mean that environmental factors are unimportant in such situations. Rather they are part of complex patterns of multiple causality, in which natural and environmental factors are always closely linked to economic, social, and political ones. This is where we need much more research and better understanding, if we are to address the root causes of forced migration.

(Castles [2002](#), p. 5)

Similarly, work within the last decade (Carling and Hernandez-Carretto [2011](#); Lucht [2011](#)) has critically scrutinized the politics behind policy efforts to classify African migrants who have struck out across the Mediterranean as “economic.” While such ascriptions serve the interests of policy-makers bent on delegitimizing any claims these migrants may make for political asylum, they clearly neglect how the economic duress from which these migrants are fleeing has been politically produced.

At the broadest level, since *Imposing Aid*, anthropologists have continuously cautioned against the influence which policy categories have often had in shaping “analytical” distinctions and shaping the questions posed in refugee studies (Bakewell [2008](#)), and in the process, have helped forge new directions and broadened the scope of the field. In the remainder of this section of the review, I plot a history of how the analytical lens of forced migration/refugee studies has been continuously refitted by anthropologists, as they have insisted on expanding the focus of the field to include populations beyond those interned in camps and whose experiences defy the distinctions of policy-makers. These include the self-settled, the internally displaced, those who deploy mobility to cope with economic and environmental distress, and others. Together these “non-camp” groups comprise the overwhelming majority of Africa’s displaced population.

Getting out of the camps: self-settled forced migrants

Despite the fact that camp-settled refugees garnered the lion’s share of displacement research attention since *Imposing Aid*¹ first turned the analytical spotlight in their direction, other important scholars (e.g. Hansen [1982](#); Rogge [1987](#); Scudder and Colson [1982](#)) argued early on for the need to study the forced migrants who self-settled outside of officially sanctioned refugee camps and who actually constituted the overwhelming majority of the displaced (only around

12% of those UNHCR categorizes as “persons of concern” are camp settled [UNHCR 2008]). Notably, the growth of self-settlement has occurred hand in hand with a sea-change over the last 30 or so years in the official posture of African governments towards refugees (and migrants in general). Whereas during the 1970s and 1980s, many African governments had generous and relatively liberal refugee resettlement policies, Crisp (2005) details how both the ideological and the material underpinnings informing these approaches have eroded. Thus, not only are refugees no longer the beneficiaries of forms of political solidarity evident during the struggles for independence and against apartheid, but also international donor support has dramatically declined, deflecting the burden of refugee care onto African countries that are already struggling with minimal or negative economic growth. Refugees have also increasingly come to be seen by these governments – and in some cases by hosting populations as well – as an additional and unwelcome economic burden (Bascom [1998](#)) as well as a problem for security.

A growing number of studies of self-settled forced migration populations have been conducted in a variety of settings across the continent (e.g. Bakewell [2004](#); Bascom [1998](#); Bjarnesen [2013](#), [2016](#); Chambers [1986](#); Dolan [1999](#); Gale [2006](#), [2008](#); Gebre [2003](#); Hammond [2004](#); Hansen [1982](#); Kibreab [1995](#), [1996b](#), [2005](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Malkki [1995a](#), [1995b](#); Polzer [2008](#); Sommers [2001](#); Willems [2005](#)). Nevertheless it is still the case, as noted by Polzer and Hammond that “self-settled” refugees in the Global South are [still] more rarely studied than those captured by official state or international interventions such as refugee camps, even though the call to pay attention to such refugees dates back two decades...” (2008, p. 420).

The need for more research on self-settled crisis migrants in and from Africa is underscored when we consider how their possibilities and predicaments are translating politically – paradoxically in part because of Africa’s unfolding “wave of democratization” following the end of the Cold War (Berman et al. [2004](#); Kaarsholm [2006](#); van de Walle [2001](#)). As Crisp notes:

Prior to the 1990’s, authoritarian governments and one-party states were relatively free to offer asylum to large refugee populations when they considered such a policy to be consistent with their own interests. But with the end of the cold war and the introduction of pluralistic systems of government in many parts of the continent, the refugee question has assumed a new degree of political importance. As in the industrialized states, both governments and opposition parties are prone to encourage nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments, and to blame their country’s ills on the presence of refugees and other foreigners.

(2005, p. 5)

The growth of nationalism and xenophobia – as evidenced in well-publicized violence against immigrants over the last decade across the continent, ranging from South Africa (Landau and Monson [2008](#); Tornimbeni [2002](#)), to Côte d'Ivoire (Geschiera [2009](#)), Kenya (Landau and Misago [2009](#)) – has also produced displacement and self-settled migrants. In this climate, African governments have increasingly sought to control those who attempt settle outside of camps, either by forcing them back into camps or by simply criminalizing them. The “criminalized visibilization” of the self-settled has served as pretext for more aggressive official treatment, such as the massive forced repatriations that have occurred periodically from Tanzania and Kenya over the last 15 years (Landau and Misago [2009](#); Muggah 2006a, 2006b; Sommers [2001](#)), or the deportation of 150,000 and 60,000 Zimbabweans by South Africa and Botswana respectively – in 2007 alone (Lubkemann [2009](#), p. 58).

A number of anthropologists have focused on how refugees have navigated this environment through complex strategies that may range from existing camps and confronting the risks of illegal status and lack of any assistance – often by fleeing to urban settings (Malkki 1995b; Sommers [2001](#)); or distributing family members between camp and non-camp options (Gale [2008](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#), [2008b](#)); or developing new forms of kinship relations that enable refugees some modicum of integration in a host society. Thus for example, in her fascinating analysis of interactions between Sierra-Leonean refugees in UNHCR camps and local Guineans in the surrounding communities, Lacey Gale Andrews highlights how camp residents leverage the resources provided by international agencies to create of new forms of relatedness between women in the camps and Guinean men through “bulgar marriages” (named after the form of wheat dispensed as official assistance by the World Food Program) (Gale [2006](#), 2007).

Internally-displaced persons

Undoubtedly one of the most significant recalibrations of the forced migration research optic – and arguably the one that has most notably influenced policy discourse and the international humanitarian regime – has been the body of work that has brought into focus and analyzed the plight of those who deploy mobility to cope with violence and crisis but who never cross international borders: i.e. IDPs (e.g. Abebe [2009](#); Agier et al. [2002](#); Bennet [1998](#); Chen and Deng [1998a](#), [1998b](#); Dubernet [2001](#); Gebre [2005b](#); Jacobsen [2005](#); Lyytinen [2009](#); Murray [2005](#); Tostensen, Tvedten, and Vaa [2001](#); Vincent and Sorenson [2001](#)). Officially precluded from even the potential of gaining any statutory status (or derivative benefits) because they had not crossed international borders but moved (and remained) within sovereign states, the internally displaced

have arguably constituted the majority of those dislocated by conflict or deploying mobility to cope with crisis in Africa. Yet these “internally-displaced” only began to be officially counted in 1982 (Polzer and Hammond [2008](#), p. 420), and gained recognition as “legitimate objects of policy action” by the international displacement protection regime starting in 1998, when the UN adopted the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Here too, foundational studies/texts involving anthropologists played a vital role – most notably the two volumes co-authored by Roberta Cohen and (anthropologist) Francis Deng ([1998a](#), [1998b](#)) – which collected case studies of internal displacement (global in scope but heavily African weighted in selection) while laying out the sociological predicament of policy and practitioner inattention, and also advocating for the Guiding Principles. Only a very few of anthropological studies (Messiant [2004](#)) have been conducted of camp-interned IDPs because access is more challenging. Research permissions are also far more problematic because IDPs are often quartered within active conflict zones, have been uprooted by their own governments as part of counter-insurgency campaigns, and remain tightly controlled.

The urban displaced

In 2004, Landau noted that urban refugees in Africa had remained almost entirely invisible to policy-makers and scholars alike until after the turn of the millennium. Yet it is likely that a third or more of Africa’s forced migrants – whether they cross international borders or are internally displaced – (self) resettle in urban areas – and have probably done so for the better part of at least the past three decades (Kibreab [1996a](#), [1996b](#), [2007](#)). The UNHCR (2008) acknowledged that globally, in 2007, of those “persons of concern” whose whereabouts are known, 27% were (self) settled in urban areas, while only 17% were settled rurally (if these proportions extend to the 44% whose whereabouts remain unknown to UNHCR then urban resettlers are clearly a majority).

Some of Africa’s fastest urbanizing countries and largest cities were – and still are – to be found in war-torn nations – or their neighbors who receive massive refugee influxes. Thus, for example, between 1975 and 2003, the years during which Angola suffered a devastating civil war, the population of its capital, Luanda grew eight-fold to an estimated total population of over 5 million. After over three decades of civil war, over 52% of Angola’s population is urbanized, and all four of its major cities are experiencing an average urban growth rate of between 6.5% and 7% per year (twice the average rate of urbanization in southern Africa) (Development Workshop 2005). Similarly, the population of Khartoum has swollen in population by 1-1,4 million due to

war and conflict-related famine in other parts of the country (Abusharaf [2009](#); Lyytinen [2009](#); Jacobsen 2008). Similarly, well over a decade after nearly 15 years of intermittent civil conflict, an estimated one in three Liberians now resides in its capital city of Monrovia (Fagen 2011). In short, contemporary displacement in Africa has been – and continues to be – by and large also a process of urbanization.

Anthropologists were amongst the earliest (Cooper [1992](#); Kibreab [1985](#), [1995](#), [1996b](#); Malkki [1995b](#); Rogge and Akol [1989](#)) to investigate Africa's urban refugees and have contributed to the growth of these studies within the refugee studies field since the turn of the millennium (Al-Sharmani [2007](#); Bernstein and Okello [2007](#); Currie [2007](#); Evans [2007](#); Fabos and Kibreab [2007](#); Fielden [2008](#); Horst [2006](#); Kibreab [2007](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Lyytinen [2009](#); Marfleet 2007; Sandvik [2011](#); Sommers [2001](#); Turner [2015](#), [2016](#); Willems [2005](#)). One example of such work is Rogaia Abusharaf's study of the predicaments and agency of self-settled IDP women in Khartoum (Abusharaf [2009](#)). Abusharaf provides an in-depth examination of how internally-displaced women from southern Sudan renegotiate gender relations in an effort to re-constitute social networks. Her nuanced ethnography highlights the gender-specific strategies and logics for engaging in female circumcision in an effort to constitute support networks that allow these women to survive the dire challenges of urban displacement in Sudan.

Displacements in place: non-movers as (also) mobility-affected

A more recent – though arguably still far less developed extension of the “critical project of visibilization” within forced migration studies – focuses on the fate of those who are affected by forced migration yet who may never actually move themselves. Amongst the most neglected of these “mobility-affected” groups are the populations who host refugees – and which remain an afterthought in forced migration/refugee studies despite having been highlighted a quarter century ago (Chambers [1986](#)) as being profoundly affected by forced migration. Expanding the study of “displacement” to include non-movers, such studies signal the potential for even broader theoretical realignments that interrogate the relationship between “displacement” and “movement.” Thus, in my own work (Lubkemann [2008a](#), [2008b](#)) I have introduced the concepts of “displacement in place” and extended the concept of “involuntary immobility” (Carling [2002](#)) to describe the predicaments of other types of actors who may never move themselves, but who are profoundly affected by the migration of others. These studies demonstrate that it is possible to be profoundly affected by wartime migration, in disempowering – or empowering – ways – or both at once, *without ever moving at all*.

In fact as analysts for over 25 years (Chambers [1986](#); Bascom [1998](#); Berry 2008; Gebre 2003; Kurimoto [2005](#); Ohata [2005](#); Ohata and Green [2005](#)) have argued and documented one need not even be in an active warzone to be affected by wartime migration, since, for example, one can be migration-affected by just being the resident of a location that experiences what are often rapid and massive influxes of migrants who are fleeing from somewhere else altogether. Similarly, those who remain behind in warzones may be profoundly affected by *the outmigration of important social others*. Thus, for example, in rural Mozambique, spousal separation occasioned by prolonged wartime separation from husbands who fled in order to avoid military recruitment during the war created significant social dilemmas for the women left behind, presenting them with choices between remaining faithful to long absent or missing husbands (and thus confronting with the long-term consequence of having fewer or no children) or alternatively have sex with men other than their long absent husbands, allowing them to bear the children that were essential to securing their future security. Over the course of the war, spousal separation thus created novel contradictions in women's lives by making the only options for the realization of their biological fertility ones which could potentially jeopardize their culturally prescribed "social fertility" (Lubkemann [2000a](#), [2000b](#), [2008a](#)).

Alternatively, some actors may witness a dramatic alteration in their social opportunities and life chances because it becomes prohibitively dangerous for them to engage in forms of migration upon which culturally prescribed life course progress depends. For example, one of the most disempowering effects of the Mozambican conflict was its disruption of long-established patterns of circular labor migration upon which household subsistence, famine-coping strategies, and the maintenance of social relations had come to depend. I encountered young men who had come of age in the militarized villages during the war facing particularly bleak social prospects afterwards, finding themselves unable to establish sustainable marriages because they had never participated in labor migration – which had for many earlier decades offered the only route through which to obtain the resources necessary to make *lobola* payments.

I have argued that those who are "involuntarily immobilized" in this way represent a distinct subset of the displaced in place, namely: those who aspire to move but cannot. The disruption of mobility may be growing in significance given the increasing importance of global diasporas and transnational strategies in many African societies (see Shandy and Lubkemann this volume). This "transnationalization of Africa" is occurring at a historical moment when a new international order of institutionalized impediments to population movement is also taking shape (Hansen and

Stepputat [2005](#); Lucht [2011](#); Martin, Martin and Weil, 2006; Landau forthcoming). In the future it may well be that the process of “involuntary immobilization” proves to be as analytically relevant as – and perhaps even more so than – that of “involuntary migration.”

PROBLEMATICS: SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Social differentiation in displacement

If anthropologists working in Africa have played a significant role in recalibrating the focus of forced migration to encompass a wider group of those affected by forced migration (whether they move or not), they have also been instrumental in pushing the field to more fully account for social differentiation – perhaps most notably with respect to gender. As late as the turn of the millennium, Elizabeth Colson remarked that: “the gendered refugee is less common, and the refugee literature is still biased toward undifferentiated ‘people’ without gender, age, or other defining characteristics except ethnicity” (Colson [1999](#), p. 23).

Anthropologists working with displaced Africans have been at the forefront in terms of studying displacement as a gender-differentiated process. Thus, for example, from relatively early on, research conducted in refugee camp settings, critically explored how humanitarian practices often undermined women and accentuated patriarchal forms of power (Daley [1991](#); Callamard 1996).

Arguably, more of the research conducted on displacement within Africa has focused on women interned in refugee camps or with official refugee status rather than on women who are self-settled and/or internally displaced. In the future, more work is needed in the mold of Rogaia Abusharaf’s study on the predicaments of, and strategies pursued by, internally-displaced southern Sudanese women who have self-re-settled in urban Khartoum (Abusharaf [2009](#)) (also see shorter studies on internally-displaced Eritrean women in Khartoum (Kibreab [2005](#)), on internally-and-post-conflict-displaced Mozambican women in the cities of Chimoio and Vereeniging (Lubkemann [2000b](#), 2002a), and on displaced Somalis in Cairo (Al-Sharmani [2007](#))). As discussed in more detail elsewhere in this volume (see Shandy and Lubkemann), work in this genre also includes a considerable amount of research that has also explored the gender-

differentiated – and gender transformative – experience of African refugees settled in the Global North (Abusharaf [2002](#); Matsuoka and Sorenson [1999](#), [2001](#); McSpadden [1996](#), [1999b](#); Moussa [1993](#); Shandy [2007](#)).

Anthropologists have also been concerned with how “gender” has more often than not been used in this field to flag the study of “women” and a very limited range of their concerns – in the process cordoning off much of the field as “genderless space” (Indra [1999](#)). Since then, the topics that have received attention from Africanist anthropologists concerned with the mainstreaming of gender in all forced migration studies have included: “security/protection/gender-based violence” (e.g. Abusharaf [2009](#); Beswick [2001](#); Crisp [2000](#); Horn [2010](#); Kagwanja [2000](#); Matlou [1999](#); Schafer [2002](#)), “refugee health” (e.g. Boelart et al. [1999](#)), refugee mental health (Ahearn 2000), refugee livelihoods/subsistence (e.g. Abusharaf [2009](#); Callamard [1996](#); Daley [1991](#); Hyndman [1998](#); Jacobsen [2005](#); Lubkemann [2002a](#); Smith [1999](#)).

While pioneering efforts to include women in refugee studies, insisting on the need to differentiate their experiences, and working to mainstream gender, much of the aforementioned anthropological work also sought to introduce more theoretically nuanced formulations of gender cast in relational terms and to examine its constitution at the intersection of class, generation, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality (see for example Abusharaf [2002](#)). This effort has also included a number of studies that specifically include an analysis of displacement-induced transformations of masculinity (Kleist 2010; Matsuoka and Sorenson [1999](#); McSpadden [1999b](#); Shandy [2007](#)). Simon Turner’s examination of the ([2004](#)) conditions impinging upon social constructions of “masculinity” amongst Burundian refugees, provides one of the more striking recent examples of how anthropological concepts of gender as relational have urged refugee studies to not simply equate “gender” with “women.”

Social dynamics of displacement

All of these studies not only demonstrate a concern with social differentiation but also show the marks of fundamental shifts in anthropological theory that have reverberated across the discipline writ large. These involve a shift from those concerns with order (and its restoration) that oriented the earliest anthropological studies of forced migration in Africa (e.g. Scudder and Colson) to a focus on dynamics and social transformation.

While anthropologists have come to view social change (gendered or otherwise) as a central feature and focus in their work, some have recently critiqued the tendency to focus solely on how

displacement creates predicaments without examining how it may also create new opportunities, that ultimately effect social change in more complex ways. Wartime migration has generally been thought of as generating various forms of disempowerment – social, economic, political, economic, cultural, and even psychic. Consequently the analysis of refugee experiences usually focuses on inventorying, comparing, contrasting, and tracing the effects of such losses – whether of social networks and capital (E. Marx [1990](#)), of economic and material goods and means (Bascom [1998](#)), of political and legal rights (Harrell-Bond [1986](#)), of agentive power (van Hear [1998](#); Kunz [1973](#), [1981](#); Richmond [1988](#)), and even of cultural moorings (Scudder and Colson [1982](#)). As I have argued, this “predicaments of displacement approach” (Lubkemann [2016](#)) has largely precluded more open-ended investigations that explore the full range of complex social and economic transformations (Hutchinson [1996](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Englund 2002b; Essed et al. [2004](#)) produced in and through displacement:

The presumption that migration will result in the package of losses (implicitly) associated with the term “displacement” tends to pre-empt analytical space in ways that preclude posing questions about what other possible meanings and effects – other than loss and disempowerment – may result from wartime migration [resulting in] a distorted rendering of those [the field does] make visible, [by] constituting the entirety of the experience of wartime migration a-priori as a litany of losses.

(Lubkemann [2016](#))

For example, my own research in Mozambique has demonstrated that while wartime relocation ultimately represented a significant and socially-disempowering disruption for many Mozambican women, it actually generated social opportunities that allowed many Mozambican men to pursue empowering risk-diversification strategies and renegotiate gender and state relations in ways that were highly advantageous to migrant men (Lubkemann [2008a](#), [2016](#)). Other studies have similarly highlighted displacement as involving a combination of losses and gains in social position (Utas [2005](#)), political power (Hepner 2009), economic opportunity, and status (Hammond [2004](#); Van Hear [2006](#)). Taken together such studies represent a still incipient shift towards investigations that explore a wider array of effects stemming from wartime migration – “simultaneously involving both forms of disempowerment and empowerment in the face of dramatically reconfigured social and economic opportunity structures” (Lubkemann 2008a).

Africanist anthropologists have not only probed the complexities of social transformation during displacement, but have also raised questions about how wartime violence and displacement relate to processes of social transformation that extend beyond the temporal confines of war.²

This is particularly evident in the significant body of anthropological work that has critically questioned predominant policy assumptions about – and prescriptions – for post-conflict refugee return. As Liisa Malkki ([1992](#), [1995a](#)) notes in her often-cited critiques of humanitarian policy, assumptions about refugees are often rooted in official discourses that “territorialize national identity” – implicitly positing that people fleeing their countries of origin lose their social and cultural identities, while failing to look at how refugees constitute new social identities and life-strategies. Powerfully ordering policy discourse, this framing – which she designates as the “national order of things” ([1995a](#)) – has also underwritten assumptions about how displacement should and could be resolved by suggesting that repatriation is the most “natural” or “least problematic” solution. Anthropologist Laura Hammond summarizes the anthropological critique of this discourse:

Terms to be found in the discourse of repatriation include: reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, rebuilding, readjustment, readaptation, reacculturation, reassimilation, reinsertion, reintroduction, recovery, and re-establishment (Gmelch 1980; Allen and Morsink 1993; Allen and Turton [1996](#)). Among the most problematic terms of the repatriation canon are the words “return” and “returnee” which imply that by reentering one’s native country a person is necessarily returning to something familiar. These terms are riddled with value judgments that reflect a segmentary, sedentary idea of how people ought to live, what their relation to the homeland should be, and ultimately how they should go about constructing their lives once the period of exile ends. The implication of these terms is that returnees should seek to move backward in time, to recapture a quality of life that they are assumed to have enjoyed before becoming refugees or that those who remained behind currently enjoy. (1999, p. 230)

Anthropological studies have led the refugee scholarship in Africa that has thoroughly debunked the notion that return is the most “natural” or self-evident post-conflict outcome for refugees. Many of these studies (Brun and Fabos [2015](#); D’Alisera [2009](#); Frischkorn [2015](#); Gale [2008](#); Hammond [1999](#), [2004](#), [2010](#), [2012](#); Janzen [2004](#); Long and Oxfeld [2004](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Malkki [1995b](#); Markowitz and Steffanson [2004](#); McSpadden [1999a](#), [1999b](#); Newbury [2005](#)) have

shown that wars – particularly prolonged ones – tend to dramatically alter the social, economic, and political profiles of the places from which refugees fled, rendering the “homes” to which policy-makers expect them to return more alien than familiar.

Moreover, the experiences of prolonged, and often multi-generational, resettlements that are increasingly the norm, can bring about profound transformations in social identities and organizations, socio-economic practices and expectations, and ultimately in social-life strategies – all of which modify refugees’ own notions of where and what “home” even is or what it should be. Thus, new social and economic attachments and investments made over the course of years in exile sometimes bind forced migrants to their areas of wartime resettlement and lead to reluctance or refusal to return (Bascom [1998](#); Dolan [1999](#); Kibreab [2004](#); Koser and Black 1999; Lubkemann 2002b, 2008). Shifts in social mores (Hammond [2004](#)) or new economic opportunities (Dolan [1999](#); Hammond [2004](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#); Malkki [1995b](#); Matsuoka and Sorenson [2001](#); McSpadden [1996](#), [1999b](#); Sommers [2001](#)) may make some people far less eager to return than others (Allen and Morsink [1993](#); Bakewell [2004](#); Bascom [1996](#)).

Unsurprisingly, analysts of post-conflict migration decision-making in societies wracked by genocidal violence (such as Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)) have found that experiences such as ethnic cleansing lend themselves with the greatest difficulty to the proposition that pre-war patterns of inter-ethnic social interaction and co-residence should be re-established (Kamungi et al. [2005](#); Musahara and Huggins [2005](#); Takeuchi and Marara [2005](#), Vlassenroot and Huggins [2005](#)). Ultimately, as Koser and Black note, “(the) implicit assumption that at the end of the conflict, a return to a ‘place’ called ‘home’ is both possible and desirable can be questioned in both its aspects: return ‘home’ may (in fact) be impossible” (1999, p. 7). Works such as those cited above have established that both the wartime transformations of former homelands, notions of home, and social relations and economic opportunity, all profoundly affect how wartime migrants contemplate and carry out (or not) projects of post-conflict return.

CONCLUSION: DISPLACEMENT AS A STRATEGIC RESEARCH SITE FOR AFRICANIST ANTHROPOLOGY

In conclusion I briefly explore a few of the ways in which the study of displacement and forced migration in Africa is contributing to both new directions in the anthropology of Africa and providing grounds for theoretical deliberations of potential import to the discipline writ large. Far

from being a comprehensive overview of how this interdisciplinary field is shaping anthropology in Africa or elsewhere, this conclusion aims to illustrate how the study of forced migration can inform broader theoretical debates in Anthropology. It also argues for the need to expand the scope of African studies itself to more fully address displacement as a central aspect of the social reality in many African contexts.

The production of transnationalized Africa: displacement diasporas

The creation of Africa's new global diaspora (Konady-Agyemang et al. [2006](#); Koser [2003](#); Okpewho and Nzegwu [2009](#)) is addressed in greater detail elsewhere in this volume (see the Shandy and Lubkemann chapter) and the transnationalization of social fields throughout the continent. It merely bears underscoring here how many of the anthropological investigations that focus on Africa's new global diasporas involve populations generated by wartime displacement (Abusharaf [2002](#); Bernal [2004](#), [2014](#); Besteman [2016](#); Eastmond [2006](#); Godin and Dona [2016](#); Habecker [2008](#); Hammond [2008](#); van Hear [1998](#); Hepner [2009](#); Holtzman 2000; Horst [2006](#); Janzen [2004](#); Koser [2003](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#), [2016](#); McSpadden [1996](#), 1999b; Shandy [2007](#); Woldemikael 1997). The studies of these displacement diasporas run a wide gamut, including investigations into the variety of roles these diasporas play and the impacts they have political processes in their countries of origin (Bernal [2004](#), 2014; Hepner [2009](#)); how they have fomented conflict and/or contributed to peacebuilding (Brinkerhoff [2008](#); Horst [2006](#); Koser [2003](#); Lubkemann [2009](#); Lyons [2006](#); Mthemba-Slater [2006](#); Muggah [2006a](#), [2006b](#)); and the social and economic impact of diasporic remittances (Hammond [2010](#); Horst [2006](#), [2009](#); Lindley [2010](#); Lubkemann 2008a) and of other forms of economic activity or of diasporic humanitarian assistance (Horst, Lubkemann, and Pailey 2016).

At the same time, recent studies such as those by Horst ([2006](#), [2009](#)), Shandy ([2007](#)), Hammond ([2010](#)), and Lubkemann (2008a, [2016](#); Lindley [2010](#)) have also demonstrated how the study of diasporic economic contributions is vital in generating a better understanding of displacement within Africa itself, by highlighting the contributions made by globally-displaced diasporans to other internally-displaced refugees and documenting how remittances shape decisions about post-conflict return.

Exercising agency in “Forced” migration: contributions to the anthropology of change

One particularly pervasive and persistent policy distinction – that drawn between “voluntary” and “involuntary” migration – has invited sustained critique from anthropologists (Lubkemann [2004](#), [2008b](#); Turton [1996](#), [2005](#); Wilson [1994](#)) while also providing a platform from which anthropologists have ventured into broader theoretical debates about “agency.” In her highly influential critique of humanitarian discourse, Liisa Malkki offered an analysis of how refugees are typically portrayed:

(as) stripped of the specificity of culture, place, and history – (and thus) as human in the most basic elementary sense. The refugee as bare humanity stands, we imagine, for all of us at our most naked and basic level...

(1995, p. 12)

Refugees have been rendered “exemplary victims” (i.e. people “to whom things happen and are done”), rather than agents who make things happen through their doing. In contrast to labor migration, refugee migration has usually been understood by policy-makers as void of strategic calculation – as a “non-decision” driven by a reflexive instinct for survival. Malkki notes that the power of this frame is such that when the displaced demonstrate any degree of self-initiative, they often find that the authenticity of their “refugeeness” is cast into doubt.

Critiquing such reductionist framings (Kunz [1973](#), [1981](#); Richmond [1988](#)) of refugee agency amongst policy-makers, a number of anthropologists have explored how wartime migrants negotiate the effects of displacement and deploy mobility as a tool for the “social navigation” (Utas [2005](#); Vigh [2003](#)) of the uncertainties and challenges of warsapes, as socially and culturally differentiated actors (Bascom [1998](#); Daley [1991](#); Hansen [1992](#); Horst and Grabska [2015](#); Khiddu-Makubuya [1994](#); Kibreab [1995](#); Malkki [1995b](#); Matsouka and Sorenson [1999](#); McSpadden 1996; Moussa [1993](#); Schaffer [2002](#); Shandy [2007](#); Sommers [2001](#); Turner [2010](#); Wilson [1994](#)). Anthropological case studies of displacement across Africa have documented the myriad ways refugees exercise agency by defying the preferences of governments and policy-makers by resisting resettlement in officially designated refugee camps and manipulating humanitarian aid distribution policies to serve their own social, economic, and political objectives (Gale [2007](#), [2008](#); Hansen [1982](#), 1992; Harrell-Bond [1986](#); Kibreab [2004](#); Lubkemann [2000a](#), [2008b](#); Malkki [1997](#); Polzer [2008](#); Sommers [2001](#)).

Agency has also been highlighted in studies that have shown how forced migrants creatively re-constitute their social identities by re-interpreting and transforming the displacement experience into a badge of social honor. For example, anthropological studies of both Hutu refugees in Tanzania (Malkki [1995b](#)) and displaced Jehovah Witnesses in wartime Mozambique (Wilson [1994](#) ; Wilson and Nunes [1994](#)) have demonstrated the ways the displaced draw upon culturally-specific referents to incorporate displacement into efforts to revitalize and revalorize group identity. In an even more recent anthropological effort to understand how migrants formulate future projects which orient their actions in conditions of duress, Kleist and Thorsen ([2017](#)), have assembled a collection of studies in which the contributors draw upon – and contribute to recent discussions about “hope” as an analytical construct – in an effort to develop new approaches to understanding how agents cope with disempowering conditions of violence and displacement through the constitution of identities and life projects that depend upon temporal – and sometimes spatial – divides between lived experiences and the conditions to which the displaced ultimately aspire.

Ultimately anthropological theories about social dynamics and change in the violent contexts in which forced migration and displacement in place both occur, will remain enormously relevant for Africanist anthropology inasmuch as prolonged armed conflict has served as the primary backdrop for entire generations in over a dozen countries in Africa over the last four or five decades.³ For the inhabitants of such places, violence, uncertainty, and precarity has become the “normal (in the sense of ‘expected’) context” for the unfolding of social life.

Anthropologists such as Honwana ([2000](#)) and Utas ([2005](#)) posit that warzone inhabitants exercise a form of “tactic agency,” meaning behavior remains largely un-attuned to any consideration for longer-term goals that typically shape decision-making under less dire circumstances. Utas draws on a term coined by Henrik Vigh ([2003](#), p. 136) – to describe this mode of social interaction as “social navigation”: the way agents guide their lives through troublesome social and political circumstances” (Utas [2005](#), p. 408). Alternatively, Carolyn Nordstrom ([1997](#)) argues that common experiences with violence have an overwhelmingly powerful re-socialization effect that is ultimately capable of overwriting social and cultural differences and forging a new common “warzone culture” – which is constituted as displaced people from disparate cultural backgrounds, find themselves compelled to share experiences and as old models fail under previously unimagined conditions. She argues that the social worlds forged herein are not in the image of what they once may have been, but “entirely anew” (1997, pp. 190, 200). Contrastively, in

attempting to understand “war as a social condition” (Lubkemann 2008a), I have argued that social relations or life projects in warzones are never re-imagined ex-nihilo, but that culturally-defined life projects and the terms of gendered and generational forms of social struggle – whose genesis predates conflict – continue to powerfully inform social interaction and behavior under even the most chaotic conditions in which the terms of those struggles are transformed. Rather than models to be replicated, cultural frameworks become sources for meaningful social problematization (Hoffman and Lubkemann 2005), drawn upon by social agents as they creatively reformulate social relations and replot life strategies (Lubkemann 2008a).

Ultimately, what the debates amongst these contemporary anthropological approaches reveal is that they all share an analytical focus on the social transformations effected in, and by, displacement. This focus on theorizing cultural dynamics and social transformation represents a departure from those theoretical preoccupations with order remaking that oriented (Colson [1971](#), [2003](#); Scudder and Colson [1982](#)) anthropology’s pioneer ventures in the study of forced migration in Africa – and offers an example of how the anthropological study of forced migration – as a vital social process in Africa – continues to engage with central theoretical problematics in the discipline of Anthropology.

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NOTES

1 Harrell-Bond's work also prefigured this important theme by highlighting refugee preference for and efforts at self-settlement

2 Some have also critiqued the widespread tendency to study displacement, without exploring how wartime violence and strategies for coping with it are influenced by the specific history of *pre-conflict* social relations, local social organization, and migration experiences (Lubkemann 2008). Taking up such a critique requires tracing social transformation beyond the course of conflict, such as Sharon Hutchinson's ([1996](#)) analysis of the historical transformations in Nuer social relations over a period of 40 years periodically punctuated by war and displacement.

3 Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Rwanda, DRC, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, W. Sahara, Namibia, Chad.