

Memorialisation discourses in northern Uganda

A study on motivations, ambitions and expectations of memorialisation

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Abstract

In post-conflict societies, memorialisation – meaning a range of processes to remember and commemorate – is increasingly considered to have a role in reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. However, the impact of memorialisation in such societies is variable and can include negative effects. We nevertheless see that people often have particular expectations about its functioning and contribution. In contrast to previous studies that have mostly examined practices of memorialisation in post-conflict settings, this study focuses on such understandings of the assumed role of post-conflict memorialisation. Through a case study of northern Uganda, it analyses the assumed roles that are ascribed to memorialisation by different actors and how their prevalence can be understood within the broader post-conflict context. The study is based on an analysis of news articles from the most prominent Ugandan news agencies, which include perspectives of a range of actors such as cultural and religious leaders, government officials, civil society actors and civilians affected by the conflict.

The study shows that a distinction can be made between assumed roles of memorialisation that are based on supposed inherent values of remembering and commemorating, and others that are based on more instrumental values of memorialisation in northern Uganda. The different roles – analysed through an examination of motivations, ambitions and expectations – also reflect emphases on different aspects of the circumstances and needs in the aftermath of the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Furthermore, it was found that even when different actors promote similar roles of memorialisation, the actual motivations for promoting them can differ significantly. In practical terms, the study calls for people working on post-conflict memorialisation to take into account diverse perspectives on memorialisation that can exist within a given setting, and to shape memorialisation initiatives in such ways that they provide space for their use for multiple purposes.

Key words: *memorialisation, expectations, motivations, northern Uganda, news articles*

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Acronyms

AAR	Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GoU	Government of Uganda
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
ICD	International Crimes Division
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IGF	Irene Gleeson Foundation
JLOS	Justice, Law and Order Sector
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMPDC	National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NTJP	National Transitional Justice Policy
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
RLP	Refugee Law Project
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPDA	Uganda People's Democratic Army
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
URN	Uganda Radio Network
UTB	Uganda Tourism Board

1. Introduction

Theories and practices about memorialisation¹ from around the world show that a variety of ideas exist about whether, how and why violent or traumatic episodes from the past should be remembered and commemorated (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Buckley-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014). It is difficult to determine the true impact of memorialisation on a society and individuals, and the impact of memorialisation in post-conflict societies is variable and can include negative effects. However, post-conflict memorialisation (in different forms) is nevertheless often ascribed a variety of functions or roles (see, for example, Barsalou & Baxter, 2007). Individuals engage in memorialisation for different reasons, and diverse expectations can be found regarding what memorialisation can do or what can be achieved through it. In post-conflict situations, specifically, memorialisation is often considered to have an important role in peacebuilding, for example because remembering or commemorating the past is believed to contribute to psychological healing or reconciliation between former opponents (Brown, 2013; Rigney, 2012).

In northern Uganda, different forms of memorialisation have been initiated in relation to the war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government²: memorials can be found throughout the region, commemoration ceremonies are held annually at a number of locations where massacres took place, and memorial centres have been developed in places such as Kitgum and Lukodi. The conflict in northern Uganda is still relatively recent; only around fifteen years have passed since the guns fell silent³ in this region. However, there has not been an official end to the war⁴ and people throughout the region are still affected by it on a daily basis. The consequences at both personal and societal levels are also extremely diverse, including psychological traumas and physical injuries, difficulties around reintegration of

¹ Memorialisation refers to “a range of processes to remember and commemorate” (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007, p. 4). More specifically, this study is concerned with *public* ways of remembering and commemorating after large-scale violence or conflict.

² Chapter 2 provides more information on the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government, including its background and the impact it has had in northern Uganda.

³ This phrase is often used in the context of the conflict between the LRA and the government of Uganda. I believe that this formulation is a good reflection of the fact that most of the armed violence by the LRA and the Ugandan government's response to it in northern Uganda ceased around 2006, but that it is problematic to state that the conflict had ended, as is explained in chapter 2. For practical reasons of readability, I do however use the term ‘post-conflict’ in the remainder of this thesis to refer to the situation since ‘the guns fell silent’.

⁴ LRA leader Joseph Kony failed to sign the final peace agreement of the Juba peace process in 2008 (Bukuluki, 2011). When the LRA left Uganda in 2006, it moved into neighbouring countries, where it “has continued to commit grave atrocities”, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR) (Bukuluki, 2011, p. 19).

persons who had been abducted by the LRA, and loss of livelihoods resulting from large-scale displacement – as is discussed in more detail in chapter 2. Local, national and international actors have engaged with different ways of addressing the legacy of the conflict, sometimes as part of a broader set of transitional justice⁵ efforts (see, for example, African Youth Initiative Network [AYINET], n.d.a; International Centre for Transitional Justice [ICTJ], n.d.; Justice and Reconciliation Project [JRP], n.d.a; Refugee Law Project [RLP], n.d.). It is within this context that memorialisation efforts such as those mentioned above are found.

Regarding transitional justice interventions, it has been argued that a recurring problem in northern Uganda is that different actors have different understandings of key concepts such as ‘justice’ and ‘peace’ (Kim & Hepner, 2019; Macdonald, 2017; Meier, 2013). As a result, interventions are often based on understandings of these concepts that do not correspond with understandings of the people they are supposed to serve – and consequently do not correspond with their priorities and needs. Ovonji-odida (2016) shows that a similar ‘mismatch’ of ideas and understandings can be found with regard to memorialisation in the region, which has resulted in a situation where many memorials – in particular those established by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – are found to be neglected and in a dilapidated state. Similar to the different possible interpretations of justice and peace, acts of remembering and commemorating the past can also be understood in different ways. This study focuses on different understandings with regard to the role of memorialisation in post-conflict northern Uganda.

Memorialisation is nowadays increasingly taken into account as part of transitional justice and peacebuilding programmes in societies affected by large-scale violence or conflict (Mannergren Selimovic, 2013; Barsalou & Baxter, 2007). Through a study on the expected contributions and functionings of memorialisation, I aim to contribute to discussions on the role of memorialisation in such contexts. My intention is not to draw general conclusions with regard to ‘what works’ in post-conflict memorialisation or how particular memories are conducive to peace. Rather, I aim to contribute to a better understanding of how memorialisation is assumed to work and what this means for how it is used in post-conflict societies.

⁵ Transitional justice is an umbrella term that refers to “ways and means of providing justice for past abuses in times of transition from violence to, at its most basic, peaceful coexistence” (Buckely-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014, p. 1). It commonly includes mechanisms such as truth commissions, tribunals, and reparations.

The following question is therefore central to this research: *what assumed roles are ascribed to memorialisation in northern Uganda by different actors and how can their prevalence be understood within the broader post-conflict context?*

In this study, ‘assumed roles’ are understood to consist of motivations, ambitions and expectations associated with memorialisation. I look at such understandings as promoted by different actors, including individuals who are engaged with practices of memorialisation – either through their work with NGOs, as local or religious leaders, or otherwise – as well as civilians who have been affected by the conflict and government officials.

The following sub-questions help to answer the main question:

- What motivations, ambitions and expectations are associated with different forms and strategies of memorialisation?
- What actors promote these particular understandings of memorialisation?
- How do the particularities of the post-conflict situation in northern Uganda help to understand the prevalence of particular understandings of memorialisation there?

To find answers to these questions, I conduct a document analysis of news articles from a number of national-level Ugandan news agencies, which cover the period from around the time when the LRA moved out of Uganda up to today. Such meanings and roles can be found both in what people say and in what they do. The diverse types of documents of these news articles allow me to study both, and also to include perspectives of a diverse range of actors.

Scientific relevance

Not only in practice, but also in academia memorialisation is increasingly studied as part of peacebuilding or transitional justice efforts in post-conflict contexts. In this relatively recent body of research, many studies focus on practices of memorialisation, and more specifically on narratives produced and promoted through such practices (see, for example, Sodaro, 2018; Ibreck, 2009; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). As chapter 3 shows, this includes studying how narratives are shaped in specific ways to support particular purposes – whether this is to work towards a more peaceful situation or for other goals. This current study, in contrast, examines post-conflict memorialisation on a different level – i.e., on the level of ideas about the assumed functioning and contribution of memorialisation in such settings. It does not look at whether particular memories or practices of memorialisation are conducive to peace, but rather at prevalent assumptions about how memorialisation works and what it contributes in post-

conflict societies. As such, it reflects critically on prevailing ideas in the literature on the workings of memorialisation.

In addition, this case study contributes insights into a particularly interesting case to the literature on post-conflict memorialisation. Previous studies on memorialisation in such contexts – in particular those focusing on politics of memorialisation – have paid considerable attention to how states or governments make use of memorialisation to support their political agendas, as well as to how it is used by other actors to contest such official narratives and uses (see, for example, King, 2010; Ibreck, 2009). However, in northern Uganda, the central government is not actively leading practices of memorialisation; memorialisation in this region is very much a grassroots process (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Kagumire, 2009). This is particularly remarkable given the central role of the Ugandan government and its armed forces in the conflict itself, and the stakes it could be expected to have in using memorialisation to promote a favourable narrative of the past. While much attention has been given to studying the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government itself, as well as interventions during and after the war, memorialisation in this context has so far received little attention in academia. This case study therefore contributes insights into (politics of) memorialisation in a ‘less typical’ situation.

Societal relevance

On a more practical level, this study is of relevance to practitioners engaged in memorialisation efforts in post-conflict societies – in northern Uganda specifically, but also in other places. It sheds light on the diversity of expectations and ambitions associated with memorialisation in societies that are recovering from large-scale violence or conflict. As such, it can offer guidance for practitioners to reflect critically on their own assumptions, as well as to explore different ideas about and understandings of memorialisation that may be prevalent in places where they work. As such, insights from this research can help to better align interventions with understandings of and ambitions related to memorialisation among the people they intend to serve.

Additionally, this study helps to reflect on the construction of ideas about memorialisation, in particular within Uganda. The news articles analysed in this study do not only reflect existing understandings of memorialisation in post-conflict settings; they also promote and disseminate particular ideas about what memorialisation can do in such situations. As such, they are likely to also play a role in shaping expectations and ‘common sense’ ideas about memorialisation

and its role in Uganda. This research provides insights into the understandings of post-conflict memorialisation that are promoted through these news articles, and more generally highlights the role that such sources of information play in knowledge production.

Structure of this thesis

Before discussing my research in more detail, I first give a brief introduction to the background and context of northern Uganda in the next chapter. This includes a brief overview of the background to the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government, key events during the conflict, and a number of important issues related to its aftermath. Chapter 3 subsequently presents the theoretical framework of this study. It discusses trends in memorialisation studies on which the current study builds, as well as a number of functions that are commonly attributed to post-conflict memorialisation, and politics of post-conflict memorialisation. Chapter 4 discusses the setup of this research, including the approach and methods used and an explanation of choices that were made throughout the research process. Chapter 5 subsequently presents the findings of the analysis. It is structured along five central elements of ambitions, expectations and motivations associated with memorialisation that were found in the Ugandan news articles. The chapter also discusses how these ideas relate to particular actors, strategies and forms of memorialisation, as well as to elements from the broader post-conflict context. The final chapter discusses the conclusions from this study in relation to theory on post-conflict memorialisation and reflections on the research process. This thesis ends with a number of recommendations for future research and practical implications resulting from this study.

2. Northern Uganda: a brief introduction

This chapter presents a brief overview of the background to the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government, a number of key events and developments during the war, and the aftermath of the conflict. This is crucial in order to understand the broader context to memorialisation in northern Uganda. Obviously, it is impossible to discuss the entire history, and, as Allen and Vlassenroot (2010) also note, there are different ways of telling this story. In this chapter, I focus on the issues from the recent history of (northern) Uganda that I consider to be most relevant to understand the findings of this research.

2.1 Historical background

Two main issues from Uganda's recent political history are important to discuss here for a better understanding of the conflict in northern Uganda: the widening gap between the northern and southern parts of the country and the militarisation of politics (Behrend, 1999; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). To understand the first issue, we need to go back to the colonial period. The British colonial administration's system of indirect rule led to the creation of tribes, such as the Acholi, and the institutionalisation of ethnic identities (Allen, 2006; Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). In addition, a clear division was made between the Bantu people in southern Uganda – roughly speaking the part of the country below the Nile river – and the Nilotics in northern Uganda. Southerners were seen as more civilised and were mostly assigned positions in the civil service, while northerners were mainly used as a source of labour for the colonial army (Jackson, 2002; Behrend, 1999; Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). This north-south division also had an economic component, with the southern region becoming more educated, productive and relatively developed, and the northern region remaining cattle dependent, mostly a source of cheap and unskilled labour and poor (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Jackson, 2002). The northern region was seen as hostile territory, and the Acholi in particular were presented as a 'martial tribe' and an 'internal other' (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Kim & Hepner, 2019).

The second issue, the militarisation of politics, began to develop under Uganda's first post-independence⁶ head of state, Milton Obote (Amnesty International, 1992; Behrend, 1999; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Van Acker, 2004). Politics in the country also "became increasingly factionalized according to ethnicity and religion" and successive regimes were characterised by mistrust and rivalries between ethnic groups, including revenge and ethnic retaliation (Amnesty International, 1992, p. 3; Behrend, 1999; Van Acker, 2004). Under Obote,

⁶ Uganda gained independence in 1962.

a Lango⁷ from northern Uganda, the military consisted predominantly of northerners – Langi and mostly Acholi (Behrend, 1999; Allen, 2006). When in 1971 Obote’s army commander Idi Amin – a Muslim from northwest Uganda – took power, Amin ordered the killing of all Langi and Acholi soldiers from the armed forces (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; Jackson, 2002). After the overthrow of Amin in 1979, Obote returned to power in 1980, and his national army, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), was again comprised predominantly of Acholi and Langi from the north. Shortly after Obote’s return, however, a guerrilla campaign was launched, led by Yoweri Museveni’s newly established National Resistance Army (NRA) (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). Fighting between the NRA and Obote’s UNLA largely took place in the Luwero Triangle⁸, where the NRA received considerable support from the population. In response, the UNLA embarked on an extremely brutal campaign against civilians (Allen, 2006; Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Van Acker, 2004). The Acholi are often held responsible for the violence and killings by the UNLA in this region: “Luwero is the ghost that haunts the Acholi” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 9; Van Acker, 2004). In 1985, the Acholi in the army seized power and made Tito Okello president, as a result of which “for the first time in Uganda’s history, both political and military supreme positions were held by Acholi” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 9). Soon after, Okello and Museveni signed a peace agreement. This was however ignored by Museveni’s NRA, which marched on Kampala shortly after the agreement had been signed and made Museveni president (Allen, 2006; Behrend, 1999). These events are “a source of deep-seated grievance among some Acholi, who claim that it shows President Museveni cannot be trusted, and has never really wanted peaceful reconciliation” (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 7).

As such, shortly after the Acholi had gained both military and political control, they were now “for the first time ... completely divorced from state power” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 13; Kim & Hepner, 2019). Moreover, the return of many UNLA soldiers led to tensions in society in northern Uganda, and many Acholi feared revenge by the NRA “for acts committed under previous governments” in line with previous patterns of ethnic reprisals (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 13; Behrend, 1999; Van Acker, 2004). Shortly after its takeover in 1986, the NRA moved into northern Uganda, with parts of the NRA wanting to take revenge for the violence committed by the UNLA in Luwero. In the meantime, a group consisting largely of

⁷ Lango sub-region borders Acholi sub-region to the south (see Appendix A). The Langi, like the Acholi, also speak a Lwo language.

⁸ The Luwero Triangle is the area located between Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, and Lake Kyoga (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 9).

former UNLA soldiers began to regroup in southern Sudan to fight the NRA, forming the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Northern Uganda was increasingly isolated from the rest of the country, with the Acholi region being declared a war zone (Behrend, 1999). The NRA's campaign against the UPDA in this period was characterised by widespread crimes and human rights abuses against the Acholi, which included looting, theft of livestock, burning of houses, supplies and fields, and sometimes rape, torture and executions (Behrend, 1999; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Bukuluki, 2011). Against this background of extreme internal and external threat in Acholi, another prominent group emerged: the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) (Behrend, 1999). It was led by the charismatic Alice Auma, who claimed to be possessed by a number of spirits, most importantly the spirit Lakwena.⁹ Her movement – which was based on spiritual¹⁰ and Christian influences – differed significantly from the secular UPDA in terms of both legitimacy and tactics, which is part of the reason why Alice initially gathered large-scale support “as conventional means had proved inadequate” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 18; Bukuluki, 2011). Her Holy Spirit Mobile Forces were initially very successful in their fight against the NRA¹¹, but in November 1987 the movement was defeated near Jinja while on its way to Kampala (Allen, 2006). Alice's father Severino Kiboya Kiberu subsequently made an attempt to follow in Alice's footsteps, but this was short-lived and unsuccessful as a resistance movement. The HSM was however also influential for another group that had emerged, which was led by Joseph Kony and would eventually be named the Lord's Resistance Army.

2.2 The Lord's Resistance Army

Joseph Kony was born in 1961 in Odek, in south-eastern Gulu district. He was a school drop-out and is said to have served as an altar-boy in the Catholic Church. Kony claimed to be a cousin of Alice Auma and to have inherited spiritual powers from her, including the spirit Lakwena (Bukuluki, 2011; Behrend, 1999).¹² After the defeat of the other groups, Kony “combin[ed] spiritual elements with traditional insurgency to defend the Acholi from Museveni's NRM [National Resistance Movement]” (Bukuluki, 2011, p. 16).¹³ He also claimed that he wanted to purify Acholi society, which would be needed in order to “fight victoriously

⁹ Alice was seen as a messenger of the spirit Lakwena and is often referred to as Alice Lakwena.

¹⁰ As Doom & Vlassenroot (1999) explain, “the Acholi world is a spiritual community, densely populated with spirits, forces and powers” (p. 17).

¹¹ In August 1986, Lakwena ordered Alice to turn to the armed struggle against the NRA. Until then, her focus had been on fighting ‘evil’ within Acholi society, including the spiritual purification of former UNLA soldiers (Behrend, 1999).

¹² Alice had however earlier rejected Kony, and continued to criticise him from Kenya where she had gone into exile after the defeat of her movement in 1987.

¹³ After a peace treaty between the UPDA and the NRA in 1988, “one of the UPDA's most ruthless and effective commanders”, Odong Latek, joined the LRA (Allen, 2006, p. 38).

against the army of Museveni and regain an autonomous political existence” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 23). However, support for the LRA among the Acholi population was low, as a result of “the rebels’ military failures and the government’s brutal counterinsurgency” – including an extremely brutal anti-insurgency operation by the NRA in 1991 (Branch, 2007, p. 180). In 1994, peace negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan government collapsed. This period marked a turning point in Kony’s approach towards the Acholi people, whom he began to blame for their lack of support, which he interpreted as support for Museveni’s government (Bukuluki, 2011; Branch, 2007; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). The LRA subsequently began to increase its violence against the Acholi population (Bukuluki, 2011). Another important development at this time was that the LRA began to receive full support from Sudan, including military equipment and training facilities – which facilitated “the makeover of what had been a motley group of rebels into a coherent, well-supplied military enterprise” (Van Acker, 2004, p. 338).¹⁴

During the 1990s, it became increasingly difficult “to see any political perspectives in the movement’s ... actions” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 26). The extremely brutal violence of the LRA had mainly turned towards the Acholi population, and the group began to make use of abduction of (young) children for recruitment (Bukuluki, 2011).¹⁵ New abductees often had to torture and kill relatives and other abducted children, as such making it practically impossible for them to return to society or family: “how can they return to their communities when their names are connected with unspeakable acts of terror?” (Cunningham, 2014; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 27). Boys usually became soldiers in the LRA, while girls were mostly forcibly assigned to commanders as wives – often referred to as ‘sex slaves’. In addition to numerous smaller-scale acts of violence, the LRA also carried out larger attacks against the population, sometimes brutally killing hundreds of people in single attacks, burning houses, and abducting large numbers of children at once. Furthermore, much of the violence committed by the LRA was highly symbolic, with acts such as cutting of legs, lips and ears used “to punish those suspected of informing the authorities” and send a warning message to others (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 27). attacking in retaliation for acts it considered as betrayal. Overall, the

¹⁴ Sudan began to support to the LRA in response to Museveni’s support to the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) (Bukuluki, 2011).

¹⁵ According to Doom and Vlassenroot (1999), Kony focused specifically on the abduction of young people because they “are thought to be the nucleus of a new Acholi identity. They are supposed to be a blank sheet of paper that may be filled in with Kony’s commandments” (p. 25).

LRA's strategy was strongly based on creating fear (Vinci, 2005), and avoiding direct confrontation with NRA/UPDF¹⁶ forces:

With a minimum of weaponry and well-trained troops, it [was] traumatizing the whole population. The complete unpredictability of when, where and how the next strike [would] occur, [was] turning the population into permanent hostages or pushing them towards displacement. The Acholi people are forced into a state of passivity, waiting for another random attack, turning everybody into a potential victim. (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 26-27)

2.3 Responses to the LRA insurgency and major developments in the conflict

Throughout the twenty years that the LRA was active in northern Uganda, various initiatives and actions were undertaken in response to the group's activities. The Ugandan government responded mostly through military deployment and actions, and during most of the war, many Acholi found themselves "caught between rebel atrocities and government military reprisals" (Bukuluki, 2011, p. 17). Moreover, military actions by the UPDF were often followed by brutal LRA retaliations against civilians. While the government itself often referred to its larger military operations such as Operation North (1994) and Operation Iron Fist (2002) as the 'final blow' to the LRA, in reality they "proved disastrous in escalating the conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian situation" (Van Acker, 2004, p. 337; Bukuluki, 2011). This was among the reasons, together the fact that the LRA consisted mostly of abducted children who had been forced to join the group¹⁷, for considerable criticism of the government's military approach to the insurgency. Prominent critics were Acholi religious leaders, many of whom united in the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in the late 1990s to pursue peaceful resolutions to the conflict.

In 1996, the Ugandan government began to move civilians in the northern region, often forcibly, into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. It argued that these camps would help to protect the civilian population against LRA attacks – referring to these places as 'protected villages' (Branch, 2007; Bukuluki, 2011; Gould, 2015; Macdonald, 2017). This resulted in the displacement of between 1 and 2 million people – of the Acholi population around 90% was displaced (Cunningham, 2014) – into around 200 camps in Acholi, Lango and Teso sub-regions (Allen, 2006; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2010). The IDP

¹⁶ In 1995, the NRA was renamed the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

¹⁷ In statements on military confrontations, the Ugandan government and its armed forces UPDF would "refer almost exclusively to the 'rebels', even where those who may have died in clashes are very young children" (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2003, as cited in Van Acker, 2004, p. 336).

camps were “tragically unprotected”, with examples of places with only 45 irregular militia to protect over 50,000 people (Branch, 2007, p. 181). UPDF barracks were sometimes located in the middle of the camps, raising questions of “who is protecting whom” (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 31). Moreover, living conditions in the camps were disastrous. Besides the poor protection – due to which civilians in the camps continued to be killed, mutilated, raped and abducted by the LRA – the IDP camps were also characterised by squalid and unhygienic environments which led to diseases, a lack of social services such as health care, and a dependency on humanitarian handouts¹⁸ – also accompanied by high levels of malnutrition (Bukuluki, 2011). In fact, the death rate as a result of the deplorable conditions in the camp – estimated at around 1000 per week (Gould, 2015; Branch, 2007) – was much higher than that resulting from LRA violence (Gould, 2015). Northern Uganda was often referred to as “the site of one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world” (Allen, 2006, p. xiii), and Dolan (2009) described this situation as ‘social torture’.

A variety of other, and sometimes contradictory, initiatives were also undertaken by the Ugandan government in response to the ongoing LRA violence. For example, in 2000, “following sustained lobbying from religious, political and community leaders in northern Uganda”, the government adopted an Amnesty Act, which granted unconditional amnesty to all those who had engaged in rebellion against the NRM government and would renounce rebellion (Bradfield, 2017, p. 829; Macdonald, 2017). Support for this large-scale amnesty programme was accompanied by local support for a revival of various ‘traditional’ reconciliation practices, which received considerable international interest (Macdonald, 2017). Around 13,000 former LRA combatants used this opportunity offered by the Amnesty Act to return to civilian life (Bradfield, 2017).¹⁹ However, in 2005, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and four LRA top commanders, after the Ugandan government had referred the ‘the situation concerning the Lord’s Resistance Army’ to the court (Allen, 2006; Branch, 2007).²⁰ Furthermore, shortly after, in 2006, a new round of peace talks between delegations of

¹⁸ Branch (2008) has argued that “humanitarian agencies have been directly responsible for enabling the government’s counterinsurgency”, particularly with regard to this large-scale displacement of people in northern Uganda (p. 152).

¹⁹ However, many people felt that the amnesty rewarded perpetrators – among other reasons due to the fact that those making use of the amnesty were given a resettlement package, while most victims of the violence perpetrated by these individuals received no support (Bradfield, 2017).

²⁰ The ICC indictments have caused much controversy. Some key issues of contention are the fact that the ICC case focuses only on crimes committed by the LRA, excluding those committed by the GoU; the question whether taking LRA leaders to a court in a far-away place in The Netherlands actually serves the interest of victims of the war; and the influence of these ICC indictments on the failure of the Juba peace talks (Branch, 2007, 2017; Gould, 2015; Kim & Hepner, 2019). In 2015, Dominic Ongwen – who himself had been abducted by the LRA at the age of ten – was handed over to the ICC as the first of the five LRA indictees. A final judgement in this case is expected

the LRA and the Ugandan government began in Juba, mediated by Vice President of Southern Sudan Riek Machar. The negotiations resulted in a number of agreements signed by both delegations – including a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2006 and an Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation (AAR) in 2007 – but Joseph Kony failed to sign the final peace agreement in 2008 (Bukuluki, 2018; Schomerus, 2012).

As was briefly mentioned above, the UPDF's counterinsurgency against the LRA was "brutal toward Acholi", who "focused their use of force on destroying suspected rebel support among civilians" (Branch, 2007, p. 180). The government army has been accused of crimes and human rights violations against the population such as extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, arbitrary arrest and the enlistment of children by the UPDF or government militias (Branch, 2007, p. 181; Gould, 2015). However, the Ugandan government has always actively maintained and promoted an 'official version' of the conflict in the north, focusing on the LRA's brutality and downplaying or ignoring government violence (Branch, 2007; Titeca & Costeur, 2015). It presented the LRA as "devoid of political legitimacy" (Branch, 2007, p. 183), for example by characterising it as "a senseless, fundamentalist spiritual cult or band of terrorist rebels with no clear and coherent ideology or rational political agenda" (Allen, 2005, as cited in Bukuluki, 2011, p. 16). This dominant narrative of the conflict justified the government's own response to the LRA and has helped it evade accountability for its own role and responsibility in major crimes and human rights violations during the conflict (Branch, 2007). Moreover, it has been argued that the Ugandan government actually had political and military interests in a continuation of the war using this official narrative (Branch, 2007; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Fisher, 2014a, 2014b). For example, on a domestic level it served "to justify Museveni's extensive and increasingly authoritarian tenure in office" and clamp down on political opposition (Branch, 2007; Fisher, 2014b, p. 323; Gould, 2015; Titeca & Costeur, 2015). Internationally, the Ugandan government received considerable American military aid and diplomatic support for its 'war on terror' against the LRA²¹ (Branch, 2007; Gould, 2015). A continuation of the war allowed president Museveni to mobilise international support, much of which would be diverted for other purposes (Branch, 2007; Gould, 2015; Titeca & Costeur, 2015).

early February 2021 (Ojora & Otto, 2020). Three of the other indictees are believed to be dead, leaving only Joseph Kony still at large.

²¹ After 2001, the Ugandan government began to refer to the LRA as 'terrorists' and present its counterinsurgency as part of the war on terror (Branch, 2017). In 2001, the LRA was also added to the United States list of terrorist organisations.

2.4 Aftermath of the conflict: consequences and reconstruction efforts

Even though the Juba peace talks did not result in a signed final peace agreement, the LRA did move out of Uganda in 2006 and the northern region has experienced relative peace and security since then.²² However, there was still much uncertainty and fear after the LRA's relocation to the neighbouring DRC – the LRA was still active across the border and it was believed Kony could return any time (Meier, 2013). Furthermore, the war had left a disastrous impact on the region and its population; civilians were the ones who had suffered the most from the violence perpetrated by both the LRA and the Ugandan government (Macdonald, 2017).²³ The consequences of the conflict were widespread and extremely diverse, and it is impossible to capture the full scale of the impact here.

While exact numbers are unknown, it is estimated that around 100,000 people had died and around 66,000 people – many of them children – had been abducted (Bukuluki, 2011; Macdonald, 2017; The East African, 2013). The war had also severely affected the economy in northern Uganda, led to destruction of infrastructure and cut access to social services. Moreover, livelihoods had been destroyed and the gap in development and poverty between the northern region and other parts of Uganda had increased (Ahikire, Madanda, & Ampaire, 2012; Bradfield, 2017; Nannyonjo, 2005). In 2006, the Ugandan government announced that the 1.5 to 2 million people in IDP camps would return to their homes – a process that would take years. However, many people had lost property and livelihood, faced land disputes upon return and had “no starting point to reconstruct their shattered lives” (I. A. Otto, 129; Kobusingye, 2018; Mabikke, 2011). Moreover, the large-scale displacement had “deeply eroded the cultural and social norms of the people in northern Uganda” and disrupted schooling for an entire generation (Bradfield, 2017, p. 829; Cunningham, 2014). Besides psychological traumas, many people also suffered physical injuries, including amputated and mutilated body parts or bullets or bomb fragments that remain inside their bodies – severely affecting a variety of aspects of life (Hollander & Gill, 2014; JRP, 2007; NMPDC, 2020). Many others remain missing up to the present day – the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated the number of people who remained missing to be at around 10,000 (ICRC, 2015) – with subsequent emotional, social, cultural, and socioeconomic consequences for their families (Hollander,

²² In the following years, the LRA did however continue to be present and commit atrocities in neighbouring countries, including a number of large-scale massacres in north-eastern DRC in 2008 and 2009 (Human Rights Watch, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2010). It remains active today, although on a smaller scale, mostly in the border region of DRC, CAR and South Sudan.

²³ Besides the Acholi – “virtually the entire Acholi population has been directly affected by this conflict” (De Ycaza & Fox, p. 351) – also neighbouring Langi, Madi and Teso were affected by the war (Allen, 2006).

2016). At the same time, the return of individuals who had been abducted by the LRA has been accompanied by problems of reintegration and stigmatisation by community members (Akello, 2019; Bogner & Rosenthal, 2017). In the aftermath of the war, neighbours and relatives who had committed violent atrocities and those who had suffered from it have often had to live side by side, and many people were at the same time victim and perpetrator of LRA brutality (Macdonald, 2017). Furthermore, girls and women often returned from the LRA with children who had been born in LRA captivity, and both mothers and children face a range of challenges in society (Ladisch, 2015; Kamoga, 2016). On a different level, there is also the “cosmological threat” resulting from the many unaccounted for deaths (Meier, 2013, p. 47). The emergence and spread of the ‘nodding disease’ in the Acholi sub-region, for example, has often been attributed to vengeful spirits from the war (Meier, 2013; Kim & Hepner, 2019).

As this chapter has shown, the post-war context in northern Uganda consists of a complex assemblage of a wide range of needs and issues that need to be addressed. Local, regional, national and international actors have engaged with different types of efforts to address the legacy of the war. It is estimated that more than 700 NGOs have been active in the region “at some point” in the post-war years, mostly in Gulu town, followed by Kitgum town (Meier, 2013, p. 33). However, many of the NGOs that were present in the period following the LRA’s relocation to the DRC left the area after a few years “to attend to crises elsewhere” (Meier, 2013, p. 31). The Ugandan government has implemented programmes that focused mostly on economic development for the region, such as the World Bank-funded Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and Peace, Recovery and Development Plans (PRDPs). However, these programmes have not addressed more structural and political issues that contributed to the (relative) underdevelopment of the northern region (Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2010). Moreover, implementation of the AAR²⁴ from the Juba peace talks, which the Ugandan government had committed to, has been lacking (Macdonald, 2017). As a result of the agreement, the International Crimes Division (ICD) was created in July 2008 “to try individuals suspected of committing war crimes in the country” (The Justice Law & Order Sector [JLOS], n.d.). However, to date it has only dealt with two cases, including a highly controversial case of former LRA commander Thomas Kwoyelo (Bradfield, 2017; Macdonald 2017; Matsiko, 2020). Another outcome has been the development of a National Transitional Justice Policy (NTJP), which was approved by the Ugandan Cabinet in June 2019 after a decade-long process,

²⁴ The AAR “proposed a national transitional justice framework to address widespread human rights violations and war crimes committed during the conflict” (Macdonald, 2019).

and now awaits implementation. Overall, victims of the war in northern Uganda often complain about the lack of government support to people who have been affected by the war (Owor Ogora, 2017), and the Ugandan government has largely evaded questions of accountability regarding its own responsibility in the conflict. However, Kim and Hepner (2019) explain that these issues are essential to many victims and survivors:

Crucially, many survivors value a form of accountability centred on the government and military's acknowledgment of wrongdoing and responsibility for the generations of structural violence—in the form of underdevelopment, exploitation, and discrimination—that remain the key to understanding the civil war itself. For them, a significant part of that acknowledgment includes material compensation for losses of life and property. (p. 282)

Indeed, for many Acholi, structural inequalities and underdevelopment that existed before the war and continue to exist today play a much more important role in their lives than the “moments of exceptional physical violence” of the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government that transitional justice mechanisms have mainly focused on (MacDonald, 2017, p. 298).

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the theory that provides the basis and framework for the current study. The first section of the chapter discusses a number of trends in studies on memorialisation. This serves to understand how the current study relates to and builds on previous research on memorialisation. The second part of the chapter discusses in more detail a number of theories about functions that are commonly attributed to memorialisation after large-scale violence or conflict. The discussion shows that a variety of ambitions and expectations are often associated with memorialisation in post-conflict contexts, and that such ideas are not objective facts or truths. The final section examines why and how memorialisation is an inherently political act, both in terms of its ‘production’ and its effects.

3.1 Memorialisation studies

Two main concepts can be identified that have played an important role in the development of studies on memorialisation. The first is the concept of *collective memory*, which was first introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s and regained prominence in the 1990s (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Russell, 2006). Collective memory can be defined as “the processes by which communities work socially to transmit narratives about themselves and others across time” (Brown, 2013, p. 275). The last three decades have seen an increase in studies on collective or social memory, which is often referred to as a ‘memory boom’: “a global phenomenon in which increasing political and societal value is attached to processes of uncovering or transmitting collective memory” (Brown, 2013, p. 275; De Ycaza & Fox). One way in which such transmission of collective memory takes place is through practices of memorialisation, which brings us to the second main concept. In the 1980s, Pierre Nora argued that in the modern era, memory and the past are no longer integrated into everyday life, but instead have become “gradual[ly] confine[d] within discrete memory locales” (Ibreck, 2009, p. 13). He referred to such ‘locales’, which could be either material or non-material, as *lieux de mémoire*. Such sites include, for example, monuments and museums (Ibreck, 2009).

Such sites of memory have often been the object of academic research. While many memorialisation initiatives are at their core motivated by a need or desire to mourn the dead (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Ibreck, 2009), practices of memorialisation have also been used for a variety of other purposes. We can see this reflected in the fact that many studies on public memorialisation have looked at functions and forms of existing memorialisation practices (Buckley-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014). For example, it has been studied how the use of memorials shifted, broadly speaking, from purposes of nation-building in the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries to purposes of public mourning after World War I. This went hand in hand with a shift from triumphant monuments that celebrated ‘heroes’ towards a recognition of civilian victims as individuals, as reflected in the common practice of naming victims (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010). Other scholars have looked at the role of memorialisation in contexts of regime change after pasts that were characterised by repression and large-scale violence (Ibreck, 2009; Jelin, 2007). Recently, attention has also increasingly been paid to memorialisation after large-scale violence or conflict in terms of its (potential) contribution to peacebuilding or transitional justice efforts (Buckley-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013).

The social nature of collective memory and its transmission implies that inevitably such processes, including memorialisation, are embedded with issues of power. As a result, a large body of research has been dedicated to studying “pathways of power and zones of contestation” in commemorations (Brown, 2013, p. 275). In addition to being sites for mourning, it has been increasingly recognised that practices of memorialisation are also used for a variety of other purposes, including making politics (Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). This could already be recognised in the functions of memorialisation described above, such as its use for purposes of nation-building. Issues of power have been found to play a role both in the production of memory through memorialisation processes, and in its impact or effect (Ibreck, 2009).²⁵

While the field of memorialisation studies was for a long time dominated by studies of memorialisation efforts in the United States and Europe (Ibreck, 2009), increasingly a more global perspective has been adopted. This has included studies of memorialisation practices in different parts of the world, but also of international developments and trends with regard to commemoration of, in particular, violent and traumatic pasts. It has been argued that such commemorations are becoming more and more streamlined globally in terms of form and content, due to the sharing of strategies and methods and the increased involvement of international actors in memorialisation practices in post-conflict societies (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). However, the consequences of this development and the extent to which it actually leads to homogenisation are subject to debate (Sodaro, 2018). Another growing trend in research focuses on the increased interest in places of memorialisation in tourism and the impact of this development. For example, Hamber (2012) describes how in such cases, commemoration of traumatic pasts becomes entangled with issues such as visitor

²⁵ Section 3.3 presents a more detailed discussion of theory related to politics of memorialisation.

numbers and income generation. Björkdahl and Kappler (2019), who explore the consequences of and dilemmas related to the promotion of memorialisation sites for international audiences, argue that such places are becoming increasingly professionalised and commercialised, often leading to a ‘commodification’ of memory and memorial sites.

3.2 Functions of post-conflict memorialisation

This section discusses in more detail a number of functions that are commonly associated with memorialisation after large-scale violence and conflict, as well as critical voices with regard to these functions.

3.2.1 Healing through memorialisation

One common idea associated with memorialisation after traumatic pasts holds that commemorating the past could provide a degree of healing for victims. In this context, the term ‘symbolic reparation’ is commonly used – i.e., memorialisation can be a form of symbolic reparation (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010). As the term suggests, in such instances memorialisation is intended to ‘repair’ or ‘heal’ something. Symbolic reparations are often distinguished from material reparations: while material reparations “might include compensation payments for economic loss, enforced displacement or physical injury”²⁶, symbolic reparations are aimed at “trying to repair the *intangible* [emphasis added] effects of conflict” (Hearty, 2020, p. 337). Different mechanisms have been identified due to which memorialisation could provide a degree of healing. According to one common view, which is most strongly associated with symbolic reparations, memorials and other forms of memorialisation can symbolise recognition and acknowledgement for suffering and wrongdoing brought onto victims and survivors (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Hearty, 2020). Such recognition and acknowledgement are often seen as crucial, or even “one of the only modes of repair”, for individuals in coming to terms with the past after extreme episodes of large-scale (political) violence (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010, p. 77; Brown, 2013). Another reason why memorialisation is argued to have potential healing effects, is because it can offer a platform or voice for marginalised people (Brown, 2013; De Ycaza & Fox, 2013). In line with this, Brown (2013) emphasises its “liberating function for victims allowing them to break an imposed silence, convey the real significance of harms and create room for emotional impact of their narratives” (p. 277). Alternatively, Hamber and Wilson

²⁶ Hamber and Wilson (2002) argue that in practice, material reparations and compensation are often not that different from symbolic acts, because “the reality is that seldom will the sums of money granted ever equal the actual amount of money lost over the years when a breadwinner is killed, and it is questionable whether the low levels of material reparations offered will dramatically change the life of the recipients” (p. 44).

(2002) argue that practices of memorialisation can “relieve the moral ambiguity and guilt survivors often feel” by helping to reattribute responsibility and blame towards perpetrators (p. 38).

However, there are also more critical and nuanced voices with regard to this idea of a therapeutic or healing potential of memorialisation. First, it has been argued that commemorating past violence or conflict can also feel like re-opening traumatic wounds or reviving negative feelings of hostility and resentment, and as such can also hurt more than heal (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Ibreck, 2009). In fact, Eastmond and Mannergren Selimovic (2012) emphasise that in some cases silence – not to be equated with forgetting – may be the preferred strategy among survivors to enable peaceful coexistence with former opponents after conflict. In terms of memorialisation as symbolic reparation provided by governments, Hamber and Wilson (2002) point to the fact that “governments often seek closure on the past more readily than individuals” (p. 45). Similarly, in many cases, “symbolic politics of far-away state institutions make little difference in war-torn communities” (Buckley-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014, p. 2). Brown (2013) brings up that memorialisation as a form of symbolic reparation may sometimes be used as “a means of attempting to depoliticise and simplify difficult political terrain” (p. 277). In cases of disappearances, more specifically, Hamber and Wilson (2002) argue that accepting reparations can be seen by survivors as a form of betrayal, symbolising that they give up the hope that one day their friends or relatives will return alive. Finally, more generally, it can also be argued that symbolic acts such as memorialisation can never bring back the dead or compensate for the immense trauma and psychological pain of many survivors, and therefore never actually bring about healing (Hamber & Wilson, 2002).

3.2.2 Social reconciliation and unity

Another rationale with regard to memorialisation’s contribution after large-scale violence or conflict involves the idea that it can help to construct a new, reconciliatory, identity by shaping collective memory. Practices of memorialisation can “shape the stories that people tell about the past” (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013, p. 346). As such, they can influence collective or social memories with regard to the past in question, and subsequently also identities:

At a collective level, a change in remembering the past ... manifests itself in *re-membering* a community, that is, re-assembling it in a different way. The identity of

the community changes in the light of different interpretations in the past. (Buckley-Zistel, 2008, p. 7)

The argumentation is that, based on this, memorialisation can help to create new ways of remembering the past that are more reconciliatory rather than divisive (Rigney, 2012). Creating a representation and memory of the past that is collectively shared by former opponents can help to bind together communities, making them feel that they belong to a same group (Ibreck, 2009; Rigney, 2012). After ethnic conflict, for example, memorials are sometimes constructed on the basis of this rationale “to promote a new, multicultural national identity” (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007, p. 7). Two examples where such a process can be observed are Rwanda after the 1994 genocide and post-apartheid South Africa. In both situations, national transitional programmes have put a lot of effort in attempts to create unity and reconciliation through a shared memory of the past (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Ibreck, 2009; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013).

While it may sound promising, this approach is also not unproblematic. This is clearly reflected in Buckley-Zistel’s (2008) statement that “remembering after violence constructs a collective identity which *may or may not* [emphasis added] render future reconciliation possible” (p. 2). Much of the criticism to this approach is based on the fact that there is always a large variety of (individual) memories with regard to past events, due to which “there will always be other stories, other interpretations, and other memories” (Jelin, 2007, p. 140). This makes attempts at creating one collective memory problematic (Hamber & Wilson, 2002). Trying to create one shared memory for a diverse group of individuals inevitably means suppressing or masking other memories, narratives and identities. Hamber, Ševčenko and Naidu (2010) argue that in South Africa, such efforts have therefore resulted in “a false sense of reconciliation” (p. 418). It can also lead to certain individuals or groups feeling excluded, when they feel that such a narrative does not represent or recognise their experiences (Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). Brown (2013) also explains that such bridging or reconciling memorialisation is difficult because different (ethnic) groups are often deeply rooted in their own narratives and symbols. The construction of new narratives and symbols through memorialisation as described in this section “may run the risk of being considered bland, inauthentic confections” (Brown, 2013, p. 285).

3.2.3 Preventing future violence through learning

A third idea about memorialisation after large-scale violence or conflict that has become increasingly common in practice and academic discussions, is that learning about the past – in particular ‘negative’ aspects of the past – will help to prevent similar violence or conflict from happening again in the future (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Brown, 2013; De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Ibreck, 2009; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). It focuses on the educational potential of memorialisation, based on the idea that the past is something that can be learnt from. The underlying rationale holds that knowledge of the past will “inspire in the individual some sort of moral transformation that will encourage them to work to prevent future violence and promote democratic values” (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010, p. 77). The belief that remembering is crucial for preventing future atrocities is reflected in the often repeated statement of ‘never again’, which has gained prominence since the emergence of Holocaust commemorations and is now used in memorialisation efforts in diverse contexts throughout the world (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2019; Ibreck, 2009). The learning element can be related to different forms or strategies of memorialisation. For example, De Ycaza and Fox (2013) describe the use of physical sites that were the actual locations of major crimes or atrocities to show communities the risks of escalating inequality and violence. Another form or strategy, which has seen a global surge and is explicitly based on this ‘paradigm’, is the memorial museum (Brown, 2013; Hamber, 2012; Sodaro, 2018).

As Bickford and Sodaro (2010) state in their research on memorial sites that are based on this paradigm, “what is interesting is that the protagonists, creators and commissioners of many of the public memorials under examination here apparently *believe* [emphasis added] that prevention is indeed possible” (p. 77). Hamber, Ševčenko and Naidu (2010) emphasise, however, that for memorialisation to actually substantially contribute to violence prevention, “careful design, innovative programming and evaluation, as well as ... linking such processes to other wider mechanisms” is required (p. 400). While they do not deny the possibility that learning about past violence can have a positive impact, they emphasise that memorialisation practices do certainly not automatically lead to the prevention of future violence. Bickford and Sodaro (2010) illustrate this through an example from the Choeung Ek killing fields in Cambodia. A survey showed that visitors to the site, many of them “international tourists with little knowledge or understanding of the Cambodian genocide” (p. 82), had learnt that the genocide had happened and was horribly brutal and far-reaching. However, the site does not provide deeper interpretation and education about the context in which the events took place.

Bickford and Sodaro therefore raise the question “whether knowing that a genocide occurred in Cambodia is enough to inspire transformation in visitors to the memorial, and in fact in the international community that is largely responsible for preventing and stopping atrocity and genocide” (p. 82). Another issue concerns the fact that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to measure whether indeed future violence is prevented through learning about the past, or to measure ‘never again’ (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010; Barsalou & Baxter, 2007). Determining the extent to which changes in attitudes of individuals are indeed the result of such memorialisation is equally problematic. With regard to the question whether it ‘works’, Sodaro (2018) makes the following simple but telling remark:

it is clear that despite a global proliferation of memorial museums calling for “never again,” again and again violence, genocide, and atrocity are committed, often with the international community’s full knowledge. So even if indeed individual attitudes are altered in a meaningful way, societal change does not necessarily follow, and memorial museums’ (and memory’s) imperative to aid in the prevention of future violence seems hollow. (p. 184)

3.3 Politics of memorialisation

3.3.1 Giving meaning to the past

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, memorialisation practices provide narratives or narrative frameworks that give meaning to past events and enable these past events to “take their place in a shared account of the past” (Hamber & Wilson, 2002, p. 49; De Ycaza & Fox, 2013). Ibreck (2009) explains that “even when the facts of an event are known and recorded they do not in themselves explain the meaning of the atrocity and its significance, which is only made apparent through narrative accounts” (p. 37). Memorialisation practices provide such narrative accounts or frameworks – i.e., they present a particular way of making sense of past events. As such, memorialisation is also a selective act: certain elements of the past and certain memories are included and remembered, thereby simultaneously excluding and forgetting others (Buckley-Zistel, 2008; Ibreck, 2009; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013).

As such, practices of memorialisation can influence collective memory with regard to past events. Memories – both individual and collective – are not objective accounts of the past, but rather socially constructed *interpretations* of past events (Ibreck, 2009; Sodaro, 2018).

Memories are interpretations of the past that are made “in light of the present” (Ibreck, 2009, p. 2); they represent meaning given to the past in the present (Buckley-Zistel & Schäfer, 2014; Jelin, 2007; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013; Sodaro, 2018). For this reason, it has been argued that memories and practices of memorialisation actually tell us more about the present than about the past that they refer to (Sodaro, 2018). Moreover, it means that there is always a plurality of individual and collective memories:

The existence of different interpretations of the past implies that at any time and place, it is unthinkable to find one memory, a single vision and interpretation of the past shared by a whole society (whatever its scope and size). (Jelin, 2007, p. 140)

3.3.2 Power and politics in memorialisation

Memorialisation, as a social process and an act of collective memory making, is inherently linked to questions of power (Brown, 2013, Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). Links to power are found on different levels. The following quote clearly explains this link with regard to the production of memorials:

Power is already embedded in the discourses and institutions through which memorials are produced, enabling certain representations of the past to become dominant and take root in memorials. Moreover, decisions about which aspects of the past are to be preserved or commemorated and how, are often influenced by those with the best access to material resources: “Public monuments do not arise as if by natural law to celebrate the deserving; they are built by people with sufficient power to marshal (or impose) public consent for their erection” (Savage, 1994: 135). (Ibreck, 2009, p. 15)

At the same time, the effect of the narrative or interpretation of the past that is presented through memorialisation also relates to power, among other reasons because “to remember is to produce an interpretation of the past which masquerades as, and is felt as, the truth” (Ibreck, 2009, p. 18). This is further discussed later in this section.

The ‘malleability’ of collective memory plays a central role in understanding politics of memorialisation (Brown, 2013). As Sodaro (2018) states, the past is “always ... open to interpretation and representation and ready to be put to use in and by the present for whatever

political ends are so desired” (p. 182). One way in which memorialisation can be used for political purposes, as a ‘political instrument’, is based on the link between memory and identity. Memorials and other forms of public memorialisation do not only reflect identities, but can also shape them (Ibreck, 2009). As was briefly explained above in section 3.2.2, changes in interpretations of the past lead to ‘re-remembering’ of communities, and as such to changes in collective identities (Buckley-Zistel, 2008). That way, practices of memorialisation can be put to use for political purposes. Alternatively, through memorialisation, “certain memories (and not others) are spun into a coherent story, which legitimises and de-legitimises certain actions” (Mannergren Selimovic, 2013, p. 335). Particular narratives of the past can for example be used to legitimise certain policies in the present, or to legitimise and maintain current power positions of particular actors – as is often argued to be the case for the narrative promoted by the Rwandan government in commemorations of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; King, 2010; Mannergren Selimovic, 2013). It should be noted here, however, that memorialisation efforts can be used for such purposes by all sorts of actors, not only states or governments.

Building on what was mentioned before on the effect of memory, practices of memorialisation are not only political in content, but also in their effect or impact (Ibreck, 2009). Some examples of this were also found in the discussion in section 3.2. For example, the promotion of a certain interpretation of the past as the hegemonic and accepted version of events inevitably leads to the exclusion of others whose experiences and memories are not acknowledged. De Ycaza and Fox (2013) also found that in societies emerging from large-scale violence or conflict, lack of acknowledgement of past crimes or certain memories “impedes the process of recovery and addressing the past in order to move forward” (p. 366). In addition, Bickford and Sodaro (2010) point at the “privileged status” of “the victim” in today’s world (p. 73). This raises the stakes in being publicly recognised as victim of certain past events, since such recognition can imply a privileged position within society.

However, memorialisation is not a one-way process that only sustains existing power relations (Ibreck, 2009). As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, there is always a plurality of memories or interpretations of the past. Sites of memorialisation should therefore be seen as sites of contestation and power struggles (De Ycaza & Fox, 2013; Ibreck, 2009). In the case of genocide commemoration in Rwanda, for example, Ibreck (2009) shows that memorialisation efforts are not only shaped by the government, but instead are contested by different actors. These include survivor groups and actors from the international community, who all have their

own memories and narratives, as well as their own motivations and agendas for engaging in memorialisation. As De Ycaza and Fox (2013) point out, “memory and memorialization are often marked by a struggle in determining whose memories count and at what cost” (p. 348). Furthermore, Ibreck (2009) points out that “remembrance can also be allied to struggles for recognition and rights” (p. 2). Such a process can also be found in Mannergren Selimovic’s (2013) analysis of the encounter between different actors involved in the development of a memorial centre in Srebrenica. Her study shows how this is a site of struggle between different narratives and agendas of external actors and the Mothers of Srebrenica in particular, but also of surrounding communities. The Mothers of Srebrenica aim for a narrative at the centre that focuses on the failure of the international community, in particular the Dutch UN soldiers. For them, the memorial centre is part of their struggle for recognition.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed common theories about memorialisation that are of relevance to the current study. It has presented a number of functions that are commonly attributed to memorialisation, and assumptions and expectations about how memorialisation can contribute to dealing with difficult pasts in societies recovering from large-scale violence or conflict. The discussion on politics of memorialisation shows that memorialisation also helps to give meaning to past events – which involves politics on different levels – and how this can be used for different purposes. In short, memorialisation is used in different ways in post-conflict societies to pursue different ambitions, some of which are more conducive to peace than others.

4. Research design

This chapter discusses how the current research was conducted and explains the choices made throughout the process. The chapter first focuses on the methodological approach of this study. This is followed by an explanation of the data that were used and how these were selected. Finally, it turns to a detailed discussion of the process of data analysis. Limitations and advantages of the approach and methods of this study are also discussed here.

4.1 Methodological approach

The previous chapter has shown that a variety of functions or roles are commonly associated with memorialisation in post-conflict situations. Such ideas about memorialisation are not established facts; there is not one ‘true’ meaning of memorialisation in this sense. Instead, these ideas are socially constructed – i.e., they are the product of social interactions (see Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). While they can seem to be ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’, these ideas are in fact products of processes of social construction that are influenced and shaped by a variety of factors.

This study examines such ideas about the assumed functioning and contribution – or assumed roles – of memorialisation in post-conflict northern Uganda within the broader post-conflict context. Based on the theory discussed in the previous chapter, I have translated ‘assumed roles’ of memorialisation into a number of (closely related) sub-elements: *motivation* for engaging in (particular forms of) memorialisation; *ambition* of what individuals want and hope to achieve through memorialisation; and *expectation* of what memorialisation will do (for individuals or society), or what it will bring about.

Such motivations, ambitions and expectations have been studied by means of a document analysis of Ugandan news articles. These documents were used to gain an understanding of different roles attributed to memorialisation in northern Uganda as expressed through both verbal expressions and actions. That means that this study is based on an analysis of documents, but to some degree it also includes an analysis of practices as reported on in the news articles. This approach of examining both speech and practices is based on the idea that understandings of memorialisation are reflected in both what is said and what is done (see Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). Furthermore, such expressions and actions do not only reflect existing ideas and understandings, but at the same time they also contribute to the construction of what come to be seen as ‘common sense’ ideas about memorialisation.

4.2 Case study

Given the fact that these ideas about memorialisation are socially constructed, it is important to also take into account the broader context in which they are found in order to better understand them. Adopting a case study approach allows me to focus in-depth on one case and its particular context – i.e., the case of memorialisation with regard to the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government in northern Uganda. This approach helps to understand both the specific nuances of this case, as well as to learn more about different understandings of the role of post-conflict memorialisation more generally (Baxter, 2010; Putney, 2010). The purpose of the current case study is to expand theory on the role of memorialisation in post-conflict situations (Baxter, 2010). This is done by using a predominantly inductive approach to data analysis, meaning that the data itself are used as the starting point for the analysis (Boeije, 2009). More about my application of this inductive approach is explained below in section 4.4.

My interest in this case of memorialisation in northern Uganda originates from an internship at PAX in the Netherlands. The organisation had been involved in memorialisation efforts with regard to the presence of the LRA in the DRC, which made me curious to learn more about how this had been dealt with in northern Uganda. I subsequently found that while much research had been done on the conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, and different transitional justice mechanisms in the region, memorialisation in northern Uganda was still a little researched issue – despite the significant number of memorialisation initiatives there. The case of northern Uganda and the war between the LRA and the Government of Uganda (GoU) also offers an interesting context to study memorialisation for a number of other reasons. First of all, the Ugandan government's role in the war is highly controversial and has received considerable criticism, as chapter 2 has shown. The country is currently still led by the same president – president Museveni has now been in office for 35 years – who has always actively promoted an official narrative of the conflict, and whose regime is increasingly intolerant of criticism. Contrary to what could be expected, also based on the political nature of memory work and a general tendency of political elite actors to use memorialisation to promote narratives of the past that are favourable to them, the Ugandan government does not take a leading role in memorialisation efforts related to the war against the LRA. This makes it a particularly interesting and less typical case for a study on memorialisation.

My knowledge and understanding of this case are shaped by my own experiences from a stay of around four weeks in (northern) Uganda in February and March 2020, which provided me with some first-hand impressions of the context. During my stay, I met persons from different

backgrounds in Kampala and Gulu, who are all engaged in work related to impacts of the conflict in northern Uganda in different ways. Most of my time, however, I spent in Kitgum, one of the larger towns in the Acholi sub-region, where I was hosted at the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) – also an office of the organisation Refugee Law Project (RLP).²⁷ This provided me with the opportunity to learn about the centre and their work, interact with staff members and visitors of the library, and to participate in some of the daily work and activities they organised. These activities included a short visit to Barlonyo memorial site²⁸ and a *mato oput* ceremony²⁹ supported by RLP/NMPDC, a discussion with school teachers and students on the recent incorporation of a transitional justice component in the lower secondary school curriculum, and some of the daily work of different staff members. In addition to that, I spent much of my free time on social activities with people of my age in Kitgum.

However, it is important to note that I myself was born and raised in the Netherlands, and I am an outsider to (northern) Uganda. This means that there are likely to be contextual elements, as well as meanings, references and nuances in the data of this study that I am not aware of. My interpretation of the data is also inevitably shaped by my own background, knowledge and experiences. In the presentation of the findings from my analysis in the next chapter, I explain in a detailed way my interpretation of the data, which includes extensive use of original data from the news articles. Besides enabling readers to develop a profound understanding of the particularities of this case, this also serves to make clear why I interpret the data in a particular way and why I come to certain conclusions. This should allow readers of this study to assess for themselves the credibility of my interpretations, and to add their own interpretation based on the data (Ponterotto, 2006).

4.3 Data collection

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this research is based on an analysis of news articles from a selection of Ugandan news agencies. The choice for the use of news articles as data was made for a number of reasons. An important practical reason is that these news articles formed an accessible source of information at a time when possibilities for physical travel and

²⁷ During this time, my ambition was to study the process of the establishment and development of the NMPDC in Kitgum. Unfortunately, my stay in Uganda was ended abruptly due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions. This also forced me to change my research focus and approach, resulting in the current study.

²⁸ In February 2004, the LRA attacked Barlonyo IDP camp and killed over 300 people there. The memorial site in Barlonyo is the location of the mass grave in which the remains of those killed in the attack were buried.

²⁹ *Mato oput* is an Acholi practice that was used before the war for reconciliation between the clans of the victim and perpetrator in cases of murder (Macdonald, 2017).

fieldwork were restricted. While I did initially travel to Uganda to study memorialisation practices first-hand, I was not able to finalise the data collection due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The news articles subsequently provided a good alternative source of data, with a number of advantages. One advantage is that the articles cover a diverse set of perspectives. They include reporting on (issues related to) currently existing memorialisation efforts and how they are used, as well as opinions and argumentations with regard to memorialisation. As such, the data present understandings of memorialisation both as found in ‘discourses’ and as reflected in existing memorialisation practices and how they are used. In addition, the journalistic reports of events or developments related to memorialisation include a variety of voices, from individual victims to religious leaders and high-level government officials. An additional advantage of the use of news articles is that the data have been produced in their original context – i.e., they have not been produced in a research setting or for the explicit purpose of my research. Finally, these news articles are particularly interesting because they do not only reflect existing views on memorialisation, but are also likely to play a role in shaping other people’s ideas about memorialisation. That is, they are likely to also influence knowledge construction with regard to what are seen as ‘common sense’ ideas about the role of memorialisation in post-conflict situations.

The selection of news agencies was based on the main criteria of them being national-level (rather than local or regional) agencies, having their articles written in English language, and having an online, digital archive with a search function. These criteria were chosen for a combination of both practical reasons and for reasons of relevance for the purposes of this study. First of all, the criteria of English language and online archive were crucial in terms of accessibility. However, the use of English language, together with the national focus, was also valuable because these platforms also address audiences beyond the region affected by the conflict. This could give insights into the relation between memorialisation in northern Uganda and the broader national (political) context. Additionally, due to this national focus and use of English language, the influence of the ideas represented in the articles on ‘knowledge construction’ with regard to memorialisation is likely to go beyond the northern region of the country.³⁰ The insights resulting from this study are therefore also of relevance to parts of the country that are not themselves engaged in memorialisation with regard to the northern war.

³⁰ In Uganda, around forty different languages are spoken. At independence, English became the official language of the country, in addition to which Swahili has been proposed as a second official language more recently (Ssentanda & Nakayiza, 2015). The many different local or regional languages are most commonly used by Ugandans, but English is the language that is best understood as a shared language by people from different regions

As a result, the news agencies that were selected for this study are New Vision, Daily Monitor, The Observer, and Uganda Radio Network (URN). Initially, I also wanted to include The Independent, but all articles published by this news agency that were relevant to the current study appeared to be reproductions of articles from URN. New Vision and Daily Monitor have since a long time been the two leading print newspapers in Uganda. *New Vision* is Uganda's daily official newspaper, which was founded by the Ugandan government in 1986. New Vision has its headquarters in Kampala and is owned by Vision Group, a multimedia conglomerate which is for the largest part owned by the Ugandan government (Vision Group, n.d.). *Daily Monitor* is the largest independent newspaper, which was established in 1992. The daily paper is owned by Nation Media Group, "the largest independent [multi]media house in East and Central Africa" according to its website (Nation Media, n.d.), which also operates in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda and is based in Nairobi. The headquarters of Daily Monitor are located in Kampala. *The Observer* is an independent weekly³¹ newspaper, also one of the largest in the country. It was founded in 2004 and is privately owned. Its headquarters are also located in Kampala. *URN*, which started in 2005, is "an independent news agency that supplies news articles and programs to over 80 radio stations and other media platforms in Uganda" (URN, n.d.). Its headquarters are in Kampala, but it has 18 bureaus located throughout the country, including in Gulu, Kitgum and Lira. Access to URN's news publications is based on the basis of monthly subscription – the archive is freely accessible, however – but its articles are also distributed through those other media platforms (URN, n.d.).

For each of the news agencies, the search function on its website was used with the following key words: memorialisation/memorialization³², memorialising/memorializing, memorialise/memorialize, commemoration, commemorating, commemorate, remembering, remember, memorial, monument. The number of results differed widely per news agency and key word, ranging from sometimes no results (e.g., 'memorialisation' and derivatives at Daily Monitor) to 164 ('commemoration' at The Observer) to 862 ('remember' at URN). When a search led to too many results – such as on the website of New Vision where, for example, the term 'memorialisation' gave over 7000 results – it was further specified by adding the terms 'LRA' and in a separate search 'Lord's Resistance Army'. Out of the resulting articles, only those related to memorialisation with regard to the northern war were selected to be part of the

and ethnic groups. However, a considerable part of the population does not speak and understand the English language – for example those who have received little or no education.

³¹ The Observer started as a weekly newspaper, after which it moved to being published bi- and tri-weekly in 2009 and 2012 respectively. In 2017, it turned back to being published on a weekly basis (Anena, 2017).

³² In the case of different spellings between American and British English, both were used.

core data for this study. This resulted in a total of 113 articles, which are listed in Appendix B. Many articles that appeared in the searches but were not direct relevant as core data for this study did however prove to be valuable for an improved understanding of the context. This included, for example, a better understanding of other post-conflict issues at different time periods, as well as issues related to memorialisation in other contexts in Uganda – such as the commemoration of other incidences of violence or conflict and the commemoration and celebration of particular individuals.

However, there are a number of limitations to this approach. The articles that form the data for this study should not be seen as representative of all ideas about memorialisation that exist in northern Uganda. Even though the diverse articles contain a wide variety of voices and perspectives, there are likely to be other perspectives that are not represented in the news articles and therefore not included in the analysis. Additionally, with regard to existing practices, only those cases that have caught the attention of the media are included. However, the aim of this study is also not to provide a comprehensive overview of all the different ideas that exist about memorialisation in northern Uganda. Furthermore, the information on existing memorialisation efforts in these articles is presented by particular journalists. The analysis of such practices is therefore based on descriptions of memorialisation-related events and statements that have been filtered and presented in particular ways by these journalists. As a result, elements of the original context, such as full speeches or conversations as part of which particular statements were made, could not be taken into account in the analysis. Finally, I do not claim to have found and included all relevant news articles that are related to memorialisation. Despite the broad search terms used, it is possible that other relevant articles were missed out on. In addition, it is possible that not all articles that have appeared in printed newspapers have also been uploaded to the online archives. However, the current selection of articles provide sufficient information from which a number of conclusions can be drawn with regard to the central question of this research.

With regard to the role of these news articles in the construction of ideas on memorialisation in a broader sense, it is important to note that a considerable part of the Ugandan population does not have access to these sources of information – whether due to financial restraints, (English) illiteracy, or for other reasons. In addition, over the past years a growing number of new online news websites have emerged, and nowadays social media also play an increasingly important role in news dissemination. The news agencies consulted here are therefore not the only sources of news information in Uganda that may influence ideas about and expectations of

memorialisation. However, the four agencies that provided the data for this research are all leading news agencies that have existed for a relatively long period of time and have been active throughout the entire period since the guns fell silent in northern Uganda.

4.4 Analysis

As was briefly mentioned in section 4.2, this study is based on a predominantly inductive analysis. This means that the data themselves largely formed the starting point of the analysis, and that I looked for relevant themes in the data – rather than using the data to test certain hypotheses based on existing theories (Boeije, 2009). However, as Baxter (2010) rightly notes, this is not a “purely inductive endeavour” (p. 89). While the research and analysis were not strictly structured following an outline from previous studies, they are nonetheless based on the theory discussed in chapter 3, which provided a framework for analysing the data. The studies that were discussed there gave focus to the analysis (Boeije, 2009). The research has been a continuous process of going back and forth between theories and findings from my own analysis (Baxter, 2010).

Based on the theoretical framework, I formulated a number of initial guiding questions, which are presented below. These questions focused in the first place on motivations, ambitions and expectations associated with memorialisation in the articles – i.e., on the assumed roles of memorialisation. A first examination of the data was done based on these questions (Triad 3, 2016). Subsequently, a number of recurring elements could be identified with regard to the assumed roles. I then also looked for strategies or forms of memorialisation that were related to them, and for actors promoting those understandings of memorialisation. That way, I went through the data multiple times with an increasingly specified focus. The findings from those examinations informed the codes that were then used to further structure, analyse and compare the data from the news articles using Atlas.ti, a computer programme for qualitative data analysis.

The following questions guided the analysis of the news articles:

- What motivations can be identified for engaging in processes of remembering and commemorating with regard to the conflict?
- What expectations of memorialisation can be found in this regard?
- What ambitions can be found – i.e., what does the person in question hope to achieve by remembering and commemorating the past?

- What forms and strategies of memorialisation are presented or promoted in this article?
- What type of news article is this – i.e., what is the purpose of the article, where and when was it published?
- Who promotes the particular ideas about memorialisation in this article?
- What elements from the broader context are referred to in the article?
- What particularities of the post-conflict context in northern Uganda do the ambitions, expectations and/or motivations found in this article relate to?

Not all news articles provided answers to all the questions. For example, it was not always possible to identify ambitions, expectations *and* motivations, and not all articles contained explicit references to issues from the broader context. However, altogether most articles did provide answers to a sufficient number of the questions to be of value for this research, as is presented in the next chapter.

5. Findings: assumed roles of memorialisation in northern Uganda

This chapter presents a number of elements related to ambitions, expectations and motivations associated with memorialisation that frequently appear in the news articles analysed for this study. The first part of the chapter focuses on assumed roles of memorialisation that can be seen as involving more direct purposes and expected benefits, relating to inherent values of remembering and commemorating (particular elements from) the past. These can also be described as more immaterial or intangible ambitions and expectations. The second part of the chapter discusses assumed roles that involve more indirect ambitions and expectations, or what could be described as a more instrumental value of memorialisation. These are also related to more material or tangible effects and imply a more pragmatic role for memorialisation.

Part 1: Roles of memorialisation based on supposed inherent values

5.1 Remembering, honouring and praying

A first and rather unsurprising notion that prevails in the newspaper articles that I analysed is that memorialisation would serve the purpose of remembering and honouring victims of the conflict between the LRA and the GoU – either victims in a general sense or victims of specific events. Such remembering and honouring are promoted both through physical structures serving to express or symbolise this, and through actions and events that provide an opportunity to (collectively) remember and pay respect to victims. These could be described as the most personal or intimate purposes of public memorialisation found in the news articles. Remembering and commemorating in these instances is mostly focused on victims who were killed during the conflict, as well as people who were abducted and whose condition and whereabouts remain unknown (Labeja, 2015a; Lekuru, 2016; “St. Mary’s Aboke mourns”, 2007; Wacha, 2011a)³³. During the conflict, people in northern Uganda experienced human losses on a very large scale, including killings of large numbers of people in single attacks at various locations. The news articles demonstrate that commemoration of these major losses often takes a public and collective form.

A variety of forms or strategies of memorialisation are promoted and used to commemorate and honour these victims, and they are promoted by a variety of actors. For example, monuments to remember and honour are promoted and constructed by survivors and communities (R. Odongo, 2009, Wacha, 2011b; Ochola, 2019), civil society actors and NGOs (Oketch, 2019; Owor Ogora, 2012) and, in a few instances, by the national government and UPDF (B. Odongo,

³³ The news articles referred to in this chapter can be found in Appendix B.

2011; Oleny, 2014). Commemoration ceremonies are also commonly organised for these purposes. These are often held annually on the day of a major attack or abduction at the site in question (Draku, 2011a; Labeja, 2013; Wacha, 2010). For example, one of the organisers of the commemoration ceremony in Atiak in 2010 – 15 years after the LRA had killed more than 300 people there during an attack – expressed that it “provides a forum for paying respect to the hundreds of innocent people that died in a massacre that was commanded by Vincent Otti, former commander of the Lords [sic] Resistance Army” (Wacha, 2010).

In many cases such ceremonies also have a religious component and include prayers for the people who were killed or went missing. During a ceremony in Gulu for children who died during the insurgency and others who remained in captivity, the Vicar-General of Gulu Archdiocese prayed “that God protects the children who are still in the rebels’ captivity until they return home” (Lubangakene, 2009). In fact, commemoration ceremonies are commonly referred to as ‘memorial prayers’ and are often led by religious leaders (Lubangakene & Moro, 2011; Okino, 2008; Olaka, 2016a). In addition, one article was found with a reference to the role of commemorations in satisfying or appeasing the spirits of the dead. The article reports that in Barlonyo, where it is estimated that more than 300 people were killed in an LRA attack on Barlonyo IDP camp in 2004, “several accounts from elders in Barlonyo and neighboring villages attest to encountering solitary spirits that have been haunting the community whenever a memorial service is not conducted” (Ochola, 2014). In this case, remembering and honouring the dead through such ceremonies serves the additional purpose of appeasing evil spirits.

In addition to monuments and ceremonies, a range of other forms of memorialisation are also promoted and applied for purposes of honouring and commemorating. In 2007 for example, during the Juba peace talks and shortly after the LRA had moved out of Uganda, Acholi cultural leaders promoted the idea of setting aside “an Apology Day in memory of the LRA victims” (Ocuwun & Ojwee, 2007). Such (national) days for commemoration were referred to several times in the news articles, including also as advocated for by a youth organisation and members of parliament (Lekuru, 2016; “News in brief”, 2008; Olupot & Odyek, 2004). Museums or centres have also been promoted and planned to be developed in memory of victims of (specific episodes during) the conflict by Acholi religious leaders, NGOs and president Museveni (Mugero, 2018; Ocowum, 2009; Ocungi, 2017).

Interestingly, we also find more practical or functional forms of memorialisation, again initiated and promoted by diverse actors – ranging from communities affected by particularly violent

events during the conflict, to civil society organisations (CSOs) and government actors.³⁴ Multiple instances are mentioned in the news articles where functional structures are requested or promised to be built in memory of (a group of) victims. This commonly concerns schools (Ocowun, 2009; Owor Ogora, 2012; “Sh2m raised for memorial”, 2010), but also other structures and facilities such as a bridge, a church and “a big multipurpose hall and library” in Atiak have been promoted for purposes of remembering and commemorating (Immaculate, 2020; Oketch, 2019; Ocowun, 2010). A case that is relatively frequently discussed in the news articles is that of Barlonyo, where president Museveni at the burial of those who had been killed in the massacre promised the community to build a technical institute, a bridge and a health centre in memory of the victims (Olaka, 2017a; Oketch, 2011; URN, 2016). This was reportedly done on request by the community of Barlonyo “that an institution be established in honour of their dear ones” (Mugalu, 2014). At Aboke, where in October 1996 139 students were abducted by the LRA from St. Mary’s College, a boarding school for girls, the functional element took yet another form. Here, in 2016, former students of the school raised funds to renovate the roofs of the school “in memory of their colleagues who were abducted by the ... LRA” (Olaka, 2016a). During the war, much of the northern region’s infrastructure, (public) facilities and services were severely damaged and disrupted. In the forms of memorialisation described here, we find a combined purpose of honouring victims of the conflict and working on more material reconstruction of the region.

In addition to such commemorations focusing on multiple victims, on some occasions public memorialisation initiatives are also set up to remember particular individuals who committed themselves to working for peace and justice during the conflict. For example, memorialisation initiatives have been established to commemorate individuals who played a role in the peace talks between the GoU and the LRA – a notable example being Acholi elders Prince Bernard Richard Olanya Lagony and Okot Ogoni who were killed by the LRA during a peace talk mission in 1996 (Labeja, 2018a). In 2018, President Museveni was reported to have promised that the government would construct a vocational training institute in memory of Prince Lagony, upon request of his family and area leaders (Labeja, 2018b). In Kitgum, commemorations are held annually in memory of Irene Gleeson, an Australian woman who moved to Kitgum district in 1991 and dedicated her life to helping disadvantaged children in the region. Since her death in 2013, week-long celebrations with a range of activities have been held annually in remembrance of her life and her contributions (Baligema, 2015; Labeja, 2017).

³⁴ Section 5.5 further discusses promises of such facilities by national-level politicians.

According to the executive director of Irene Gleeson Foundation³⁵, “the commemoration event helps to keep Mama Irene memory alive in honour of her contribution to education, health care and support to vulnerable children” (Ocungi, 2019). Kitgum district town council also named a road in Kitgum after Irene Gleeson “in recognition of her efforts in rehabilitating war-affected children in northern Uganda” (Mugalu, 2014), and in Lamwo district a major hospital would be named after her “in respect of her memory” (Baligema, 2014).

5.2 Emotional healing and relief

Another recurring understanding of memorialisation in the news articles holds that it can bring about a degree of emotional healing or relief, taking away some of the psychological pain and suffering of individuals affected by the conflict. In this context, reference is regularly made to remembering or commemorating more generally, without mentioning specific forms of memorialisation. In cases where a specific form is mentioned, however, these are mostly ceremonies, museum-like initiatives, or activities. What stands out here is that these forms can be described as having a more ‘active’ element in them, as the following examples illustrate.

In 2005, one year after the attack on Barlonyo IDP camp, the vice-chairperson of Lango Parliamentary Group wrote in *New Vision* that the Lango political, religious and cultural leaders had decided to hold a ‘Massacre Memorial Service’ on the first anniversary date of the attack. One of the stated objectives of this memorial service was “to pray for the victims of the Barlonyo massacre, to hasten their healing process and to give them hope” (Atubo, 2005). More recently, in 2019, the NGO RLP³⁶ launched an exhibition at Uganda Museum in Kampala about the experiences of girls who had been abducted by the LRA. RLP director Chris Dolan reportedly stated that the exhibition was “aimed at healing all the girls abducted by Lord’s Resistance Army rebels”; “the clothes, books, and other items are being displayed to provide healing to the victims of the LRA war who are still hurting” (“Today in pictures”, 2019). And in the aforementioned case of renovating the roofs at Aboke school in memory of the abducted students, the chairperson of the association of former students said that “their decision to re-roof all the buildings in the school was to try to wash away the bad memories of the tragedy” (Olaka, 2016a). We clearly see here that while the strategies of memorialisation are diverse,

³⁵ Irene Gleeson Foundation (IGF) is an organisation that developed out of the work of Irene Gleeson. Its activities have included a focus on education, health, water and hygiene, as well as management of a community radio station in northern Uganda (IGF, n.d.).

³⁶ RLP is an organisation that was established in 1999 by the Faculty of Law at Makerere University in Kampala, as a community-outreach project (RLP, 2020). It has an office at the NMPDC in Kitgum, and it manages the memorial centre there as part of its Conflict, Transitional Justice & Governance program.

they do share that they imply a form of interaction, whether physical in the case of Aboke school, or a form of mental interaction as in the other two examples.

One exception to this that was found in the news articles, is when president Museveni promised the construction of a memorial vocational institute, a health centre, and a bridge in memory of the victims of the massacre at Barlonyo IDP camp. He said that these would serve “as a consolation to the surviving community” (Olaka, 2017a). He seemed to suggest that these structures built in memory of the victims would provide a degree of emotional relief to survivors of the massacre in Barlonyo. These pledges were presented as a form of reparation, of a material nature but also with a symbolic meaning. And indeed, in particular in the initial ‘post-war’ years, there was often a strong need for services and facilities such as education, healthcare and infrastructural development among war-affected communities in northern Uganda— as was also mentioned in the previous section. However, issues of accountability are also frequently discussed as being crucial for people affected by the violence in northern Uganda, in which the Ugandan government would have a major role. In the case of Barlonyo, where Museveni made the abovementioned statement, the government has been criticised for having failed to protect the population of the IDP camp when the LRA attacked in 2004 (Bukulukli, 2011). The expression by president Museveni quoted above can therefore also be seen to reflect an ambition to encourage the community to move on without addressing the Ugandan government’s own underlying responsibilities.

A distinction between material and non-material needs in the post-conflict situation as related to memorialisation and emotional healing is also emphasised in the following example. In 2016, Titus Oryema, the councillor for Omiya-Anyima sub-county in Kitgum district argued for the establishment of a database of persons who had gone missing during the conflict, as well as a day of remembrance. He argued that “documenting the missing and remembering the dead is one way to facilitate internal healing, something that cattle or seedlings distributed to victims cannot do” (Lekuru, 2016). As was also mentioned in chapter 2, the conflict led to a loss of livelihoods for a large part of the population in northern Uganda, and issues of material support for basic livelihood provision have been widely discussed and advocated for in the post-conflict era.³⁷ However, this quote from the councillor clearly illustrates that the conflict has not only led to physical and material needs, but also to emotional and psychological suffering and

³⁷ See also section 5.5 for more on this.

traumas. In the cases described here, memorialisation in different forms is attributed a role in addressing those issues by providing a degree of emotional or psychological healing.

The abovementioned quote from Titus Oryema also brings us to a final issue that was found in relation to ‘healing’, which concerns documentation about the conflict (“Northern war museum”, 2010; Wacha, 2010). Very little documentation was carried out during the conflict, as a result of which issues such as exact numbers and identities of victims – both killed and abducted, including those who remain missing – and details of particular events remain largely unknown (Mugero, 2018; Labeja, 2018c; I. A. Otto, 2020). Since documentation efforts help to uncover what happened during the war, it is seen as also facilitating commemoration of that past. A good illustration of the importance of documentation for memorialisation and its role in emotional healing is that of the monument constructed at Barlonyo memorial site. At the site where the remains of massacre victims were buried in a mass grave, the Ugandan government shortly after the massacre constructed a memorial stone with the inscription saying: “Here lie the remains of 121 innocent Ugandans, who were massacred by the Lord’s Resistance Army terrorists on February 21, 2004” (Musinguzi, 2013).³⁸ However, it is commonly agreed that the number of casualties from the attack is much higher, with over 300 people having been killed. The fact that the memorial only acknowledges 121 victims is a contentious and painful issue for many in Barlonyo (Musinguzi, 2013; Ochola, 2014; Olaka, 2017c). Nono Francis of the NMPDC in Kitgum – which includes one among a number of (grassroots) initiatives that have begun to work on documentation of conflict events and experiences – also advocates for the importance of both documenting and remembering experiences from the conflict, arguing that they can “to some extent ... be a healing therapy to the victims and survivors of conflict” (Francis, 2018).

5.3 Future-oriented: education and prevention

In the news articles, we also find understandings of memorialisation that can be characterised as reflecting more future-oriented ambitions and purposes. These take different nuances, but revolve around the notion that memorialisation is important in enabling people to learn about and/or from the past, also in the future. On some occasions, more specific mention is made of a potential contribution of remembering and commemorating the past to preventing a reoccurrence of similar violence in the future, as the following quotes illustrate. Nono Francis, Transitional Justice Practitioner at RLP and the NMPDC in Kitgum, as part of his explanation

³⁸ This inscription clearly reflects the official government narrative which since the beginning of the ‘war on terror’ has referred to the LRA as terrorists (see chapter 2).

as to why it is important to remember this past, argued that “to avoid future repetition or re-occurrence of a similar nature of conflict events, generations after generations need to know what happened, as part of their history” (Francis, 2019). Similarly, in 2011, State Minister for International Cooperation Henry Okello Oryem is reported to have “urged the people of northern Uganda to set a day of remembrance for thousands of people who died during the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency”. According to Oryem, “the day would remind future generations not to repeat such mistakes”, saying that “it was unfortunate that most people have now forgotten about the war and its bad effects” (“News in brief”, 2011).

On another occasion, during the memorial prayers for the 16th anniversary of the attack at Atiak trading centre, Rwot³⁹ Santo Apire of Atiak reportedly stated that the 1995 massacre by the LRA “should be an eye opener to the Acholi not to rebel against government”. Rwot Apire “advised the Acholi to shun any rebellion against the Government” and announced that “what the LRA did should teach us that rebellion is bad” (Iubangakene & Moro, 2011). In this case, the commemoration ceremony is used to both remind people of the bad things of the LRA rebellion, and to encourage them to use this knowledge of the past to learn from it – in this case by refraining from rebellion. On the one hand, this could be seen as a politically motivated statement; Rwot Santo Apire has been reported to have strong ties with the national government (Komujuni, 2019). At the same time, however, Uganda’s post-independence history has seen many armed rebellions against sitting governments and changes of power have been characterised by military takeovers. As was mentioned in chapter 2, this played an important role in the emergence of the LRA insurgency. These statements by the Rwot of Atiak could therefore also reflect an ambition to actually prevent a repetition of past events that led to the violence in Atiak and in the wider region. Similarly, at the Atiak memorial ceremony in 2012, president Museveni made the following statement, as part of a speech in which he also promoted the NRM’s achievements in the country and the northern region more specifically: “Today I came to be with you as we remember those who died but also to draw lessons out of that problem to ensure it never happens again” (“Modern army a recipe”, 2012). This expression should however be seen within the broader context in which president Museveni has not shown true commitment to addressing underlying structural issues that played an important role in the emergence of the LRA and further developments in the conflict.

³⁹ A *rwot* is a customary chief in Acholi (Komujuni, 2019).

With regard to forms and strategies of memorialisation, we see here that in relation to these future-oriented ideas attention often goes to the actual sites where specific events took place during the war, and on strategies of memorialisation of a more explicitly informative nature (Odongo, 2012b; A. Otto, 2018). Good illustrations of the former are the site of the mass grave at the former IDP camp in Barlonyo, and the promoted preservation of places that were used as shelters for night commuters⁴⁰ in Gulu during the conflict. For example, one survivor explains that a shelter near the bus park in Gulu “reminds him of the worst conflict he endured in his lifetime” and that it “should be preserved for future generations” (Labeja, 2016). Previously, Gulu district had also expressed support for the preservation of such shelters “as historical sites for memory, future research and tourism” (Labeja, 2016). The NMPDC⁴¹ in Kitgum, in contrast, is an example of a more explicitly informative and educational form of memorialisation. It holds “a museum, library and peace documentation centre”, including a collecting of “artifacts about war” (Oboi, 2011). In 2010, when construction of the museum-like centre had started, Moses Okello who led the project said that one of its purposes was to “benefit posterity” (Jaramogi, 2010). At the opening of the centre the following year, chairman of the Uganda Law Commission Joseph Kakooza who commissioned the centre, “said it would act as a reminder to avoid another conflict in the country in future” (Oboi, 2011). A similar idea was also expressed by Acholi Paramount Chief Rwot David Onen Acana II at the launch of a new exhibition at the NMPDC in 2019, stating that “the centre will not only store memories but also be a learning platform for children and future generations” (Ocungi, 2019b).⁴² Another example – also involving RLP – is the exhibition about the experiences of girls in LRA captivity at the Uganda Museum that was also referred to in the previous section. At the launch of this exhibition, director of RLP Chris Dolan reportedly said that – in addition to the healing purposes of the exhibition – “it's about keeping the memories alive so that people do not forget the things that happened. When we forget, we can start to repeat the things that should never have happened” (“Today in pictures”, 2019).

⁴⁰ ‘Night commuters’ is the name given to the large numbers of children who would walk from rural areas into nearby towns at night in search of safety from the LRA during the conflict. They would often sleep in (usually unguarded) bus parks, church grounds, local factories or in the streets (Bukuluki, 2011). It is estimated that at a certain point during the war, around 30,000 children commuted to towns for safety every night (Amnesty International, 2011).

⁴¹ The NMPDC, which was initially named Kitgum War Memorial Centre, was funded by USAID and implemented by RLP, who still manage the centre.

⁴² While news articles from 2010 and 2011 also reported criticism regarding the planned construction of the museum, this criticism related to practical issues rather than ideas about its role in educating and preventing violence in the future (Jaramogi, 2010; Draku, 2011b).

However, similar ambitions and expectations were also found in relation to monuments. For example, in 2009 Concerned Parents Association⁴³ erected a monument in Lira “built in memory of thousands of children abducted and killed by the rebels”. The chairperson of the association said “that the monument was to serve as a lasting reminder of the horrors of war and the need for peace” (R. Odongo, 2009), implying an ambition to avoid a recurrence of similar violent events in the future. In 2012, the LCIII chairperson⁴⁴ of Abia sub-county said that survivors of the Atiak massacre wanted government to construct a monument “because they want to keep that part of their history for the next generation” (Odongo, 2012a). For these cases, as well as the other instances where the promoted forms of memorialisation do not include explicit informative elements, it is not clear precisely what type of knowledge the memorialisation sites should transmit and how this knowledge would serve future generations. However, based on the news articles, it seems that overall more attention is paid to specific events from the war and the impact of the war than to understanding how the conflict emerged and developed. Moreover, in contrast to sections 5.1 and 5.2. the focus here is much more on commemorating events relating to the war, rather than their victims as individual persons.

Finally, such a role for memorialisation has also been promoted in combination with memorialisation’s potential to attract tourists – which is further discussed in the next section. This was mostly expressed by government officials responsible for tourism, but also by others such as Nono Francis from RLP (Nono, 2018; Kamukama, 2017). For example, in 2011, then newly appointed Tourism State Agnes Akiror said that the Ugandan government had gazetted four IDP camps as tourism sites. She is reported to have said that her ministry would support these sites “to educate especially youth on the effects of war, while learning how to resolve conflict peacefully” (Ssegawa, 2011). Similarly, a 2017 article by Daily Monitor asserted that places such as museums and statues to commemorate the history of the LRA war form “an untapped tourism resource” (Kamukama, 2017). Besides generating revenue, the article continues, “the sites present lessons for many Ugandans to learn about unification and integration”. The article subsequently states that, even though Uganda Tourism Board (UTB)⁴⁵ had not yet engaged in the promotion of such tourism, according to its chief executive officer

⁴³ Concerned Parents Association is an organisation that was founded in 1996 by relatives of the students who were abducted from St. Mary’s College in Aboke in October 1996. The organisation was formed “to advocate for the release of all children held captive by the Lord’s Resistance Army” (R. Odongo, 2009).

⁴⁴ The local government system in Uganda consists of Local Councils (LCs) on five levels. From LCI to LCV, these levels are the village, the parish, the sub-county, the county, and the district. LCIII refers to the sub-county level, of which the chairperson is nominated through elections (Kavuma, 2009).

⁴⁵ UTB is “the official Government destination market organization with the responsibility to promote and market Uganda as the preferred tourism destination in Africa” (Tourism Uganda, n.d.).

Stephen Asimwe “the beauty about dark tourism is that it helps you to reflect and not go back to the old days” (Kamukama, 2017). Furthermore, Minister of Tourism Ephraim Kamuntu was found to have promoted a similar idea when he represented Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda at Barlonyo’s annual memorial service in 2019. At the ceremony he said, “let us guard the present peace and avoid a repeat of the past violent experiences, which caused a lot of bloodshed in this country”, while commissioning a resource and documentation centre in Barlonyo that was to be promoted as a tourist site (Ebong & Otwei, 2019).

As was mentioned in chapter 3, similar ideas about the importance of memorialisation for purposes of learning from the past and preventing future violence have spread globally in recent decades. Northern Uganda has in its post-conflict years seen many linkages with international actors. For example, a large number of international organisations have engaged with issues of post-conflict reconstruction in the region, and many Ugandan CSOs working on issues of transitional justice and peacebuilding receive funding from international donors or work with partner organisations in other countries (AYINET, n.d.b; JRP, n.d.b; Meier, 2013). International donors have also engaged with issues related to transitional justice through the Ugandan government, for example through the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) which is an important actor in the NTJP (JLOS, n.d.). These international influences may have played a role in spreading such ideas in northern Uganda, which are now found among a wide range of actors, including survivors’ associations, local government officials, cultural leaders, civil society actors and also army and central government officials. Another factor to discuss in this regard is the fact that the history of the conflict between the LRA and the GoU is generally not taught in schools in northern Uganda (Cunningham, 2014). RLP, together with the National Curriculum Development Centre, did launch a transitional justice component to implement in lower secondary school curriculum in 2017 (NMPDC, 2020). However, this programme focuses mostly on skills and not on knowledge of the history of northern Uganda and the war. This could potentially also help to understand why local (government) leaders and civil society actors promote a role for memorialisation in teaching younger generations about this part of their history.

Part 2: Pragmatic perspectives on memorialisation

The roles attributed to memorialisation discussed so far were based on ideas about inherent values of remembering and commemorating the past. The ideas discussed in this second part, in contrast, are about more indirect ambitions that memorialisation is seen to serve. As

mentioned earlier, these could also be described as more pragmatic understandings of memorialisation.

5.4 Generating revenue through ‘dark tourism’

One more pragmatic view on memorialisation that was found in the news articles concerns the idea that memorialisation can serve to attract (more) tourists as a way to generate revenue. The development and promotion of memorialisation sites is expected to attract tourists to these sites, accompanied by income or revenue. The role of tourism was also briefly touched upon in the previous section 5.3, regarding educational functions of memorialisation. For the most part, however, memorialisation for tourism is associated with economic benefits in the news articles. Overall, it can be argued that the expected benefits from memorialisation in this case are also more of a material nature than in the understandings discussed in the previous sections.

In the news articles, ambitions to promote memorialisation’s for tourism are particularly linked to ‘authentic’ sites of (particular events from) the past in question or, in some instances, places that explicitly provide information on the particular past. A much discussed example of the former is again Barlonyo memorial site, which Tourism and Wildlife Minister Ephraim Kamuntu in 2019 said would be “developed and promoted as a tourist attraction in memory of the victims of the horrendous massacre” (R. Odongo, 2019). Both Lango Cultural Institution and Lira District Council Speaker Martin Ocen Odyek have also promoted the same idea on multiple occasions since 2012 (Olaka, 2016b; R. Odongo, 2012b; R. Odongo, 2013). Furthermore, in 2011, at a time when the vast majority of IDPs had moved out of the IDP camps, the idea of developing a number of these camps “as tourists’ attraction sites” was already raised by the then newly appointed State Minister for Tourism Agnes Akiror (Ssegawa, 2011). In addition to Barlonyo IDP camp, she also mentioned Lukodi and Pabbo IDP camps, as well as Aboke Girls School as potential tourism destinations. In another example, Gulu district is reported to have shown interest in the preservation of sites of former night shelters also for tourism (Labeja, 2016). With regard to the second category of memorialisation strategies linked to tourism, a clear example is again the NMPDC in Kitgum. At the launch of new exhibition in 2019, for instance, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of UTB “emphasized the need to market the centre as one of the dark spot tourist destinations in the country” (Ocungi, 2019).

A distinction can be made between, on the one hand, the promotion of memorialisation for tourism in the light of national-level benefits, and on the other hand, more local benefits of such tourism for the area and community around the sites. The former is centred around the idea that the promotion of memorialisation related to the war between the LRA and the GoU for tourism

would bring financial benefits to the country. For example, a 2014 opinion article in Daily Monitor commented on plans by UTB to turn particular episodes from Uganda's past, including the LRA, into tourism products. The unknown author refers to memorialisation in this context as "ingenious cash cows", and refers to an idea of "a Joseph Kony memorial". They conclude that "UTB can objectively brand Amin, Kony, Kibwetere⁴⁶ and others yet to follow into tourism products and foreign exchange-spinners" ("Promoting our dark", 2014). Business reporter Eronie Kamukama in Daily Monitor also referred to statues and museums remembering the LRA war as "an untapped tourism resource that can raise the number of visitors received and turn around tourism's contribution to the country's gross domestic product"– while also "present[ing] lessons for many Ugandans to learn about unification and integration" (Kamukama, 2017).

Such an understanding of memorialisation related to the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government – i.e., basically as a product that can be sold for purposes of generating national income – seems to be particularly promoted by actors who are not themselves engaged with the consequences of the conflict in the northern region. This is different from the those who focus more on local benefits on tourism, which is discussed below. One article by Francis Nono of the NMPDC in Kitgum can be seen as an exception in that regard. He focuses specifically on 'memory and memorialization' as a potential point of interest for tourism, also in northern Uganda with regard to the war between the LRA and the GoU. Besides the idea that as such, many more people would be able to learn from 'negative' pasts, he also very much presents it as a way to diversify the tourism sector – which is currently dominated by nature-related tourism – and attract more tourists. In the article, he focuses mostly on benefits to the country on a general level, rather than about the potential consequences for people who have been affected by the conflict: "how many more tourists, both local and foreign, would we be able to attract to Uganda, not to mention the benefits that comes [*sic*] with it?" (Nono, 2018). The author does, however, also more specifically encourage readers to visit the NMPDC memorial centre in Kitgum, where he himself worked.

Such understandings of memorialisation seem to be strongly influenced by examples from other countries. In the news articles, we find regular references to a global trend of increased interest in 'dark tourism', as well as to a number of places around the world that successfully attract

⁴⁶ Joseph Kibwetere was a leader of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in southwest Uganda. In 2000, he died together with around 1000 members of the movement in an explosion in their church, which is often referred to as a collective suicide carried out by the movement's leaders ("Kanungu massacre: how government", 2018; Walliss, 2005).

foreign tourists to places that commemorate their ‘dark pasts’ (Nono, 2018; “Promoting our dark”, 2014). Moreover, in the news articles this understanding of tourism is particularly found among national government and civil society actors, who are often well-connected to international networks. Until recently, this idea of promoting ‘negative’ aspects of Uganda’s past for tourism did not seem to be a common perspective (Kamukama, 2017). It seems to have gained ground in recent years however, with those promoting the idea commonly referring to such international examples. The 2014 opinion piece in Daily Monitor referred to earlier in this section illustrates this, stating that “UTB’s proposal to brand former president Idi Amin, rebel leader Joseph Kony and cult leader Joseph Kibwetere as Uganda’s popular tourism products” might sound ‘strange’, ‘ridiculous’, and almost ‘laughable’. However, the author subsequently supports the idea while referring to a number of other countries that have successfully applied it (“Promoting our dark”, 2014).

Additionally, as mentioned above, in the news articles promoting memorialisation for tourism is also associated with expectations of local benefits, more specifically socioeconomic development in the area and community around the proposed tourism sites. The examples that follow illustrate how this is promoted by a more diverse set of actors than the national-level focus described above – ranging from (representatives of) communities around particular sites to local institutions and government ministers. For example, in the article about the gazettelement of IDP camps for tourism that was cited in section 5.3, State Minister for Tourism Agnes Akiror is reported to have said “that communities living around the IDPs [*sic*] will manage and earn a living from the sites, besides empowering them to come out of the misery” (Ssegawa, 2011). When at the 2019 Barlonyo memorial service Minister of Tourism and Wildlife Ephraim Kamuntu commissioned a resource and documentation centre there to be “promoted as a tourist site”, he expressed the following: “I am going to instruct the Uganda Tourism Board to promote this place as an important tourist destination and I urge you, the community, to take advantage of the tourists who will be coming to earn money” (Ebong & Otwii, 2019).

Support for these ideas of promoting Barlonyo memorial site for tourism was also found among (representatives of) survivors of the massacre at Barlonyo. The abovementioned decision by the Tourism and Wildlife Minister to develop and promote Barlonyo memorial site “as a tourist attraction in memory of the victims of the horrendous massacre”, involving UTB, was welcomed by the chairperson of Barlonyo memorial site, who was “optimistic that turning Barlonyo into a tourism site shall enhance their livelihood” (R. Odongo, 2019a). A survivor of the massacre is also reported to have asserted that “once the site is turned into a tourist site, it

shall boost the commercial activities of the sub-county” (R. Odongo, 2019b). The cultural institution of Lango also presented its ambition to build hotels in the area as part of its plans to turn Barlonyo memorial site into “a centre for tourists” (R. Odongo, 2012b).

The ambitions and expectations presented above are found in a context where areas affected by the conflict have faced high poverty rates and relative economic underdevelopment – in particular as compared to the rest of the country (Ahikire et al., 2012; World Bank, 2016). As previously discussed in chapter 2, one of the consequences of the conflict is a relative lack of economic opportunities and development in the region. Uganda as a country receives many tourists – around 1.5 million international tourists in 2018 – and the tourism sector is increasingly important to the country’s economy, representing around 7.75% of its GDP and 6.7% of total employment in the country in 2018 (Acorn, 2020). However, tourism is currently predominantly concentrated in other parts of the country; the northern region – in particular the areas most affected by the war between the LRA and the GoU – does currently not benefit much from these trends. Discourses about ‘dark tourism’ and associated benefits, which are gaining ground in the country, seem to be viewed by people in the region on different levels as an opportunity to take advantage of the situation there in order to improve the socioeconomic situation of communities affected by the conflict.

5.5 Memorialisation as a platform

A final understanding of memorialisation that prevails in the news articles is that practices of memorialisation serve as platforms or occasions to present particular messages or promote particular agendas. In these instances, it is more about indirect ambitions that are promoted through memorialisation. That is, it is not the act of remembering or commemorating per se that is believed to have beneficial effects, as was the case in the first part of this chapter. Rather, acts of memorialisation are seen as providing a platform to pursue other goals. In these cases, the focus is less on the actual events of the past, and much more on current issues; memorialisation initiatives are seen as offering a platform that can be used to address issues that are of concern at that moment. In this section, I illustrate this role of memorialisation by describing a number of different variants of it that frequently appeared in the news articles – mostly in the context of commemorative events such as memorial prayer ceremonies.

First, practices of memorialisation – in particular commemorative events and ceremonies – seemed to be viewed by national-level politicians and religious leaders as providing a platform to present appeals to major players in the conflict. This was (mostly) found in earlier news articles from the final years of the LRA’s presence in northern Uganda and the period shortly

after they had relocated to the DRC.⁴⁷ Two recurring themes here are appeals to continue peace negotiations and find a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and appeals to release children who remained in LRA captivity. For example, at the memorial prayers in Barlonyo in April 2007, at a time when the Juba peace talks had been stalled for months and the LRA had threatened to withdraw from the negotiations (Atkinson, 2009), then Vice President Gilbert Bukenya called upon Kony to return to the negotiating table. He is reported to have made the following statement: “Please Kony and the LRA, return to the negotiating table with the Government and let’s give these people a chance to have some peace, some laughter and some happiness” (Nabusayi, 2007). Within the highly political context of the peace talks, however, this could also be seen as a message by the Vice President with a hidden agenda – i.e., to show the community of Barlonyo and possibly the population of northern Uganda that the government was fully committed to the peace process and that any potential failures would be blamed on the LRA. Furthermore, religious leaders have also made appeals to both the Ugandan government and the LRA to find peaceful solutions to the conflict, including in the years after the peace talks. This happened for instance in April 2009 during memorial prayers in Gulu for children who died during the insurgency and others remaining in LRA captivity, where Vicar-general of Gulu Archdiocese Matthew Odonon “urged the Government and the LRA to continue pursuing peaceful means to end the conflict” (Lubangakene, 2009). Similarly, at the 2011 commemoration in Atiak the bishop of northern Uganda diocese and chairman of ARLPI “called upon the Government to renew peace talks in order to end suffering in the Great Lakes region” (Lubangakene & Moro, 2011). Indeed, even though the LRA had moved out of Uganda in 2006, it was all but certain that they would stay away. Meier (2013) described this situation as follows: “for most Acholi, the period following the LRA’s departure did not differ greatly from the time preceding it, when nobody knew where they would strike next. Since Kony has not been captured, he could return at any time” (p. 27). Moreover, as was also referred to in the last quote, the LRA continued to commit atrocities in neighbouring countries, where the UPDF was still involved in military operations against the group.⁴⁸

The other common theme is the release of children who remained in LRA captivity, as expressed by (representatives of) relatives and civil society actors, including religious leaders, in northern Uganda during commemoration ceremonies and events. Such appeals have been

⁴⁷ The earliest news article that was found in the online archives dates from 2004. I can therefore not tell to what extent this may also have occurred at possible instances of memorialisation during earlier years of the conflict.

⁴⁸ For example, in 2008 and 2009, after military operations against the LRA in north-eastern DRC led by the UPDF, the LRA committed a series of extremely violent attacks on the population there (Human rights Watch, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2010).

directed at the LRA itself, the Ugandan government and the international community. For example, Aboke school and Concerned Parents Association were reported to hold annual commemorations to both honour the abducted students and “advocate their release” (Okino, 2008; Wacha, 2011a). At the commemoration service in 2011, appeals were also made to the government of Uganda and the international community “to rescue all the children who are still in LRA captivity” (R. Odongo, 2011). ARLPI also addressed the international community in this regard during memorial prayers at Lukodi IDP camp, which had been organised by the American NGO Invisible Children and was attended by a number of international dignitaries. The chairman of ARLPI “asked the international community to pressurise Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebel leader Joseph Kony to release children still in captivity” (Ojwee, 2009). A commemoration event on Human Rights Day in 2012 – held in Odek, the village where Joseph Kony is from – was also used, and this specific location chosen, “to renew calls of appeal for unconditional release of thousands of children still believed to be held by Joseph Kony in the bush” (Emma, 2012).

Similarly, religious leaders in particular seem to view such memorialisation practices also as providing occasions to call upon those present to pursue particular virtues such as forgiveness, unity or reconciliation. Commemoration ceremonies are often used by religious leaders to call upon people to first of all pray for those who had been killed and abducted, but also to adopt such virtues. For instance, at the 2007 memorial service in Barlonyo, Bishop Joseph Franzelli expressed that “we must all live together and not let differences ‘religious, political or social’ to [*sic*] separate us” (Nabusayi, 2007). At the service at Aboke in 2016, he also “urged the public to use the day to embrace unity and love amongst themselves so as the suffering of the girls who were abducted may not be in vain” (Olaka, 2016a). Similarly, during the 2009 memorial prayers in Gulu referred to earlier, the Vicar-General of Gulu Archdiocese also said that “what we need as Ugandans is only forgiveness and reconciliation” (Lubangakene, 2009). The virtues that are promoted reflect a strong link to both the past conflict and the present situation. They concern current conditions and are aimed at improving the current situation in the affected society, but obviously hold a strong link to the past conflict and the impact it has had.

On a different level, for people whose lives have been severely affected by the conflict, such instances of memorialisation seem to be viewed as offering a platform to address the Ugandan government and urge it to take action on issues of concern – mostly in terms of providing support to victims and survivors of the war. For example, at a commemoration ceremony with

the UPDF in Agago district, where civilians had been “massacred and cooked in pots” by the LRA in 2002, relatives of those who had been killed in the attack “urged Government to help their orphans and widows” (B. Odongo, 2011). One 83-year old woman is reported to have expressed the following at the occasion: “I lost four relatives on the fateful night. I request the Government to help me educate children they left with me” (B. Odongo, 2011). Such requests are also presented by local leaders and community representatives, such as at the 16th annual memorial prayer in Atiak in 2011 referred to earlier, where Bishop of northern Uganda diocese Johnson Gakumba “urged the Government to compensate those affected by the war in order to improve their lives” (Iubangakene & Moro, 2011). As was explained in chapter 2, the Ugandan government has largely neglected the needs of individuals affected by the conflict. At the same time, the needs among the population of northern Uganda as a result of the war were extremely high and diverse – in particular in the initial years after the LRA’s departure from the region, but in many cases continuing up to the present day – and included basic necessities such as livelihood provision, health care and education. We find in the news articles that public commemoration events seem to be viewed as occasions to address pressing issues related to the past conflict and demand support from the Ugandan government. National-level politicians, including president Museveni, are also often invited as (chief) guests to such events (Olaka, 2017c; Ono, 2007), which may among other reasons be to ensure that indeed the ‘advocacy messages’ reach the level of the Ugandan government.

More specifically, practices of memorialisation are also used to draw attention to the plight of specific ‘categories’ of victims, often also involving demands for support to those victims. A common case is that of families of missing persons. In particular on 30 August every year, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, events are commonly organised – particularly in Kitgum – to remember and commemorate those who remain missing and draw attention to the impact of the situation on their families (R. Odongo, 2012b; Kwo, 2019). In 2015 on this day, for instance, relatives of missing persons held a march in Kitgum town, holding a piece of paper with the names of their missing relatives and day of their disappearance, “to pile pressure on [the] international community to renew actions aimed at freeing [the] estimated 10,000 children abducted during decades of LRA rebellion in the region” (Labeja, 2015b). In addition to ceremonies and other events, the dissemination of testimonies in the media can also be considered as a form of remembrance that is used with similar ambitions.⁴⁹ In early 2020, for example, Daily Monitor published a five-part series of articles

⁴⁹ Ibreck (2009) also states that testimony “is a form of remembrance in its own right” (p. 24).

that focused on the experiences of individuals and the difficulties they face as a result of the war, such as victims of land mines and widows with children who were born in IDP camps or in LRA captivity (I.A. Otto, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). These testimonies also included appeals to governments for support, for example to provide budget for support of orthopaedic centres that provide prostheses and support for start-ups for income generating activities (I.A. Otto, 2020b).

Finally, in the opposite direction, we also find a use of memorialisation practices by national-level politicians – not least president Museveni – for political messaging towards war-affected communities in northern Uganda. Section 5.1 already briefly introduced promises made by politicians regarding the construction of facilities in memory of victims of particular events during the war. More generally, the news articles suggest a trend in which politicians seem to view ceremonies to commemorate (events from) the conflict, such as annual memorial prayers, as providing a platform for political symbolism and messages – for example through pledges of material support, sometimes presented as ‘reparation’ and ‘compensation’. For instance, at the 3rd annual commemoration of the massacre at Abia, State Minister for Health Emmanuel Otaala – a member of the ruling NRM party – announced that “the government [was] to distribute 30 ambulances to health units in the war-affected districts” and would “renovate all health units in the region”, as well as support the construction of a memorial vocational school in Abia (“In brief”, 2007). Similar promises are found to have been made by president Museveni, such as a pledge “to improve Atiak (Lwani) Memorial Secondary School with modern facilities to remember the massacre victims” and “compensation for cattle claimants and ex-combatants” announced at the 2012 commemoration in Atiak (Owor Ogora, 2012). Interestingly, on this occasion president Museveni also made “a cash donation of Shs400,000 to the Atiak Massacre Survivor’s Association, and a pledge of Shs50 million”, clarifying that this was a personal contribution and not compensation. This is a good illustration of a broader pattern that can be observed here. As discussed in chapter 2, the Ugandan government led by president Museveni has shown very little commitment to issues of reparations and support to individual victims after the war, and has particularly evaded questions of responsibility and accountability relating to its own role in the conflict. It seems that in this context, public commemoration events related to the conflict – which are mostly locally initiated – are viewed as providing a platform for (symbolic) expressions of support to the affected population, while avoiding more difficult political questions. This impression is further strengthened by the fact that it often takes years of continuous reminders before action is undertaken towards the

fulfilment of such promises, as the news articles also show (Lekuru, 2016; Olaka, 2017a; Ochola, 2018).

Additionally, other forms of political messaging are also found at commemoration ceremonies as reported on in the news articles. Examples can be found of politicians from the ruling NRM party encouraging people in northern Uganda to focus on the future rather than on the past. For instance, at the 2020 ceremony commemorating the massacre in Abia, Minister for Local Government Raphael Magezi of the NRM donated one million Shillings to victims and survivors of the massacre while “ask[ing] the survivors to move on and focus on development instead of dwelling on the past” (Immaculate, 2020). In a similar instance at the 2017 memorial service in Barlonyo, State Minister for Internal Affairs Obiga Kania, also of the NRM, “asked the public to remember it [the LRA’s activities] not for revenge but use it to forgive those who were responsible for the atrocities so as we forge a new future” (Olaka, 2017c). Given that to date no meaningful efforts have been undertaken by the Ugandan government to address past crimes, human rights violations and other injustices, particularly when it comes to the role and responsibility of the NRM government, such acts and statements could be yet another attempt to divert attention from these more difficult questions. Finally, even more explicitly, president Museveni used the 17th memorial service in Atiak in 2012 to thank “the people of Atiak and northern Uganda in general for voting for the NRM Government in the 2011 general elections” (“Modern army a recipe”, 2011). He stated that thanks to democracy and the army now being ‘modern’ – which he said was “still young, moving on foot” at the time of the conflict – there is now peace in the region. In his speech, he “thank[ed] the people of Uganda for voting NRM to give them time to build a professional army. What we need is continued political support to move” (“Modern army a recipe”, 2011).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a range of assumed roles that are attributed to memorialisation in northern Uganda as were found in the news articles. The first part of the chapter shed light on a number of clear expectations and ambitions that relate mostly to supposed inherent values of acts remembering and commemorating the past. The expectations and ambitions highlighted in the second part, in contrast, are associated with more indirect objectives – i.e. objectives that people pursue and expect to achieve through specific practices of memorialisation. It was shown that in all cases, these ideas are closely related to diverse aspects of the post-conflict context in northern Uganda. Motivations for memorialisation were often found to relate to efforts towards post-conflict recovery of people’s lives and the region – either in material or non-material terms.

However, this chapter has shown that in some instances, the promotion of particular roles for memorialisation also seems to be motivated by other interests.

6. Conclusions and discussion

This chapter starts with a discussion of the main conclusions from this research and how they relate relevant theory and literature on post-conflict memorialisation. This is followed by a reflection on the research process, including on the extent to which I have been able to realise my initial ambitions and on a number of limitations to the research process. I end this chapter with recommendations for future research and implications for praxis that are based on this study.

6.1 Conclusions and discussion

This research has attempted to answer the following question: *What assumed roles are ascribed to memorialisation in northern Uganda by different actors and how can their prevalence be understood within the broader post-conflict context?* The previous chapter presented diverse ambitions, expectations and motivations associated with memorialisation in northern Uganda that were found in Ugandan news articles, structured along five ‘sub-themes’ of recurring elements – which should not be seen as clearly defined and separate categories of conceptualisations of memorialisation. The different perspectives are mostly complementary or even overlapping rather than conflicting, and multiple assumed roles for memorialisation can be promoted simultaneously by one person. For example, survivors of particular violent events can sometimes be found to simultaneously ascribe roles to memorialisation of honouring relatives who died in the event, helping to prevent a reoccurrence of similar events in the future, and providing a platform to advocate for government support. While the understandings of memorialisation described in the previous chapter can be found to conflict with the (very few) instances in the news articles where survivors express a preference not to commemorate – in particular not to commemorate specific events that are considered too painful - no conflicts were found among the different assumed roles described in chapter 5.

The analysis has shown that clear perspectives can be found in the news articles with regard to the assumed role of memorialisation in post-conflict northern Uganda. A distinction can be made between, on the one hand, roles based on supposed inherent values and functionings of memorialisation, and on the other hand, more pragmatic perspectives relating to more instrumental roles. The former in particular correspond strongly with ideas that are commonly described in literature on post-conflict memorialisation as discussed in chapter 3.2. However, the analysis has provided a number of interesting additional insights. To begin with, an interesting phenomenon in northern Uganda is the promotion of functional structures such as schools to commemorate and honour victims of the war. We see here that acts of

memorialisation are combined with more practical needs in communities. In these instances, public memorialisation is to a certain extent also more incorporated into daily life, rather than being restricted to exceptional moments such as annual memorial prayer events. Such places are still clearly defined ‘locales’ for commemoration, but they can be seen as *lieux de mémoire* that are embedded in people’s daily lives.

With regard to the idea that memorialisation can provide a degree of emotional healing to victims and survivors of the war, we also see something interesting here. The news articles contained one case that could be seen as a form of memorialisation as symbolic reparation, when president Museveni promised the construction of a number of memorial structures to the community of Barlonyo. As described in chapter 5.2, this can be seen as a clear example of what Brown (2013) described as an attempt “to depoliticise and simplify difficult political terrain” (p. 277). In most cases, however, acts of (collective) remembering and commemoration in themselves seemed to be expected to bring a degree of psychological or emotional healing – in particular forms of commemoration that involve ‘active’ elements. This was particularly found where it concerned commemoration of relatives or others from the community who had been killed by the LRA. In addition, different forms of memorialisation – most notably commemoration ceremonies – are commonly used to express demands for material reparations. We see here that rather than memorialisation being a form of symbolic reparation towards victims and survivors, practices of memorialisation are mostly used by (representatives of) victims and survivors to demand material reparations from the central government, which would to some extent also be seen as a form of recognition and acknowledgement.

The analysis also showed assumed roles of memorialisation that were more explicitly oriented towards the future, reflecting expectations that people would learn from it and, in some cases, ambitions to prevent future violence. While similar ideas in this regard were found to be promoted by different actors, this actually seems to happen based on different motivations. Apart from local leaders and (representatives of) survivors, such roles for memorialisation were also promoted by government officials responsible for tourism or president Museveni for example. In those cases, the promotion of discourses on learning and violence prevention actually seems to be motivated by other agendas. Regarding the former, these are people speaking from positions whose main task is the promotion and further development of tourism. Together with the many references made to financial benefits associated with memorialisation for tourism, this gives the impression that these discourses mainly serve to promote the use of memorialisation for tourism in support of their agendas. In the case of president Museveni,

these words are spoken in a context characterised by a lack of commitment by the national government to address underlying structural issues that played a major role in the occurrence of this past conflict in the first place – which would seem essential in order to prevent that similar events happen again in the future.

In addition to those less tangible contributions, we also find perspectives of more pragmatic roles of memorialisation with more tangible expected benefits – mostly in two ways. A first more pragmatic approach concerns the idea that post-conflict memorialisation can be promoted for tourism as a way of generating revenue. On the one hand, this is promoted by what can be described as national-level actors, who are not directly engaged with the post-conflict situation in northern Uganda, such as abovementioned officials from governmental tourism agencies. These actors focus on financial benefits with such tourism on a national level, viewing memorialisation sites in northern Uganda as ‘products’ that can generate revenue. On the other hand, however, we also find actors within northern Uganda, such as (representatives of) survivors and communities affected by the war, as well as civil society actors, who promote similar ideas of using memorialisation sites for tourism. However, while the expectations are similar in terms of the potential for income generation, these actors mostly promote it with a view on stimulating local socioeconomic development. In that context, this role for memorialisation can be seen as an instrument in local post-conflict reconstruction efforts. We see here again that a similar assumed role of memorialisation is promoted by diverse actors with diverse ambitions and motivations.

A second more pragmatic approach relates more explicitly to political motivations and purposes associated with memorialisation. As was shown in chapter 3, studies on politics of memorialisation have often focused on ways in which particular interpretations of the past are promoted through memorialisation to support specific (political) agendas. The analysis of this study has shown that in northern Uganda, practices of memorialisation are also themselves used as a platform from which to directly express concerns, voice demands or promote (political) agendas. For example, (representatives of) victims and survivors seem to view practices of memorialisation as a platform through which they can urge the Ugandan government to take certain actions or to fulfil previous promises of support to people affected by the violence. This supports Ibreck’s (2009) assertion that memorialisation can also be linked to struggles for recognition and rights. However, in this case it happens not (only) by means of promoting specific narratives of what happened as presented through practices of memorialisation. Rather, it is about the physical act of memorialisation that is seen as providing an occasion to draw

attention to the plight of victims and to unfulfilled promises from the central government. In such instances memorialisation serves as an ‘advocacy tool’ to address pressing issues that are related to the conflict, rather than as a means to contest official narratives of the conflict. President Museveni and other central government officials, in turn, seem to view these (mostly grassroots-initiated) activities as occasions to make visible statements of support to war-affected communities – words that are however not always lived up to in terms of actions.

More generally, this study has shown how understandings and expectations of memorialisation often seem to reflect circumstances and needs that are related to the conflict between the LRA and the GoU. It can be argued that the need for solutions to issues that have resulted from the conflict is largely projected onto memorialisation. Memorialisation is seen as a means to achieve certain objectives, or to lead to positive changes on issues of concern – whether directly or indirectly, on tangible or intangible issues, and on individual or collective matters. As such, it can be argued that understandings and expectations of memorialisation are very much shaped by issues and circumstances in the present – although related to the past conflict which the memorialisation practices refer to. This ranges from addressing needs that are a direct consequence of the war, to using memorialisation as a platform through which to urge the Ugandan government or the LRA to take action to stop fighting. From the point of view of central government officials, practices of memorialisation provide an occasion to promote themselves as providing solutions to problems in the aftermath of the war. Memorialisation practices are not only viewed as serving to remember what happened in the past, but also gain a role of addressing and serving issues that are considered important at that very moment. As was mentioned in chapter 3, it has previously been argued that narratives about the past – such as those found in practices of memorialisation – actually tell us more about the present than about the past in question. A similar argument can be made with regard to expectations and motivations associated with memorialisation in more general terms, which strongly reflect present-day needs and priorities.

Understandings and expectations of memorialisation also seem to be influenced by practices and trends in other countries. In the news articles, references are regularly made to other countries – in particular to Uganda’s neighbour Rwanda and South Africa – when speaking of expected benefits or purposes of memorialisation, such as its potential to provide a form of healing or to attract tourists. The perspectives on memorialisation that are found in northern Uganda should therefore not only be seen to reflect local or domestic issues; they are also shaped by international influences. Similarly, as was briefly mentioned above, the news articles

also show references to a number of other international trends in thinking about memorialisation. A good example of this is the promotion of the idea that people should learn about and from the past in order to prevent future violence, and the promotion of memorial museums to stimulate such processes. This study suggest, however, that despite such international influences, it would be inappropriate to speak of a homogenisation of memorialisation practices in line with globally prominent templates. The analysis has shown that individuals often associate a variety of purposes and expectations with memorialisation. The introduction of external ideas or influences should therefore not be seen as necessarily replacing other existing ideas about memorialisation. Moreover, the different perspectives found here do also strongly reflect local needs and priorities. While some elements may be adopted from internationally common discourses, they continue to be shaped by local contextual factors as well.

While the understandings of memorialisation that were found in the news articles do clearly reflect circumstances from the broader context as chapter 5 has shown, at the same time a number of elements that could be expected to play a role here in relation to memorialisation receive very little or no attention. For example, the idea that memorialisation can contribute or lead to reconciliation did not receive much attention in the news articles. While the concept of ‘reconciliation’ was regularly found in more general terms as something that is called for by (religious) leaders, for example during commemoration ceremonies, it was not found in the way in which it is commonly discussed in literature – i.e., by means of emphasising a narrative of a shared past that binds people (see chapter 3.2). Given the specific context here, with major disruptions in society as a result of the conflict – for example due to the large-scale and long-term displacement and difficulties around re-integration of formerly abducted persons – and the role of the problematic relationship between Acholi and the Ugandan government in the conflict, it could have been expected to find a role for memorialisation as providing possibilities to collectively deal with the past in a reconciliatory way. Surprisingly also, hardly any mention was found of memorialisation in relation to Acholi cultural beliefs regarding the role of spirits of the dead in individuals’ daily lives in the present. Given the close relation between memorialisation and the dead – against a background characterised by the enormous loss of lives during the conflict, often without possibilities for proper burials – a larger role could have been expected to be attributed to memorialisation in relation to this in the news articles. The absence of these subjects from the news articles could however also be related to the fact that

the news articles are likely to present only a selection of perspectives on memorialisation, but based on the current study it is difficult to provide certainty on this.

6.2 Reflections on the research process

At the beginning of the research process, my ambition was to study how memorialisation is shaped in practice in northern Uganda. I wanted to look at processes of the development of memorialisation initiatives, focusing also on ambitions and motivations of different actors involved and (power) relations between them. More specifically, I planned to study this through a case study of the establishment and development of the NMPDC in Kitgum. My aim was to get a better understanding of frictions and politics at play in memorialisation processes in northern Uganda, and to learn more about the role of memorialisation in broader reconstruction efforts in the region. With this in mind I travelled to Kitgum, where I was hosted by the NMPDC. However, due to the implementation of travel restrictions following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, I had to leave Uganda before having been able to gather sufficient data on the ground to study those processes and interactions.

As a result, I had to adapt my approach to the research. I therefore looked for existing data on memorialisation in northern Uganda, hoping to be able to gain insights into the (potential) contribution of memorialisation to reconstruction and peacebuilding in the region in this way. This led me to various documents from NGOs in the region and news articles. The news articles included a more diverse set of perspectives, and were particularly interesting because of their wider outreach and their role in also shaping ideas about post-conflict memorialisation. I therefore decided to focus on the news articles for an in-depth analysis. However, I quickly came to the conclusion that I was unable to confidently draw conclusions on the actual role or impact of memorialisation based on these secondary data sources. However, the available texts did demonstrate clear perspectives on the *assumed* or *expected* roles of memorialisation in post-conflict northern Uganda. I therefore decided to focus on such expectations and motivations associated with memorialisation.

Given the political sensitivities in northern Uganda's post-conflict context outlined in chapter 2, I was expecting that memorialisation in northern Uganda would be a highly political issue. Initially, I therefore wanted to study politics involved in the development of memorialisation practices in northern Uganda, also including the promotion of particular interpretations of the past. While the current study did not focus directly on politics involved at that level, it has shown that the assumed and promoted roles of memorialisation are clearly intertwined with a

number of major political elements in the post-conflict context in northern Uganda, as explained in the first part of this chapter.

A few additional limitations have become apparent during the research process. With regard to existing practices of memorialisation, this study is solely based on practices that have caught the attention of the media. A number of sites and initiatives have received considerable attention – such as commemorations in Barlonyo, Atiak and Aboke – while many smaller initiatives at less known sites in the region find no representation at all in the news articles. Similarly, even though the news articles do cover perspectives from a range of actors, they do not represent a complete overview of understandings of memorialisation to be found in northern Uganda – as was also pointed out earlier in this chapter. This could also partially explain the absence of references to social reconciliation and Acholi beliefs which I highlighted above. However, the purpose of this research was not to provide an overview of all perspectives on assumed roles of memorialisation in northern Uganda. Despite the fact that other interesting perspectives may therefore not have been taken into account, this analysis has provided valuable insights into diverse understandings of the role of memorialisation in the region and how these are intertwined with politics in different ways.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

This study has also raised a number of new questions. For example, what do the different expectations mean for the way in which memorialisation initiatives are shaped? To what extent are individual memories adapted in order to serve particular purposes – whether promoting lessons to be learnt, supporting ‘advocacy efforts’ or attracting tourists? To what extent do other people affected by the war experience such expectations and ideas as restrictive or rather as liberating, opening up space to address issues from the past? Furthermore, there are two other issues and recommendations for future research that I want to clarify in more detail.

First, one group of people whose perspectives on memorialisation are absent from these data, are individuals who were formerly abducted by the LRA and have returned to northern Uganda. These individuals find themselves in a complex position in which they are often both victims and perpetrators of acts of violence – in particular boys and men. Many girls and women have returned with children who were born in captivity. The absence of their perspectives in this study raises questions of how they – including children born in captivity, whose (mostly absent) fathers were LRA soldiers – view memorialisation of the past conflict, what it means to them, and how it affects their positions in their respective communities. Understanding these issues

would provide valuable insights that could also help to better understand the potential of memorialisation to contribute to sustainable peace in post-conflict northern Uganda.

Second, the news articles examined for this study give the impression that existing practices of (public) memorialisation in northern Uganda focus almost exclusively on human rights violations and violence committed by the LRA. However, as discussed in chapter 2, the Ugandan government has also been accused of human rights violations in its responses to the LRA in the region – for example with regard to its handling of the IDP camps and its military strategies. Related to that, existing practices also seem to focus predominantly on (victims of) armed violence, rather than more structural forms of violence were central to the conflict. Instead of focusing on narratives of past events at individual memorial sites, future research could zoom out to examine the overall narrative of the past that emerges from existing memorialisation efforts, how this shapes people's understanding of the conflict, and the influence thereof on intra-Ugandan relations.

6.4 Implications and recommendations for praxis

From the current study, two main recommendations for praxis also emerge. The first recommendation is based on the expected influence of news articles such as those analysed here on common ideas about post-conflict memorialisation in Uganda. In the news articles of this study, relatively little attention is paid to the often contested nature, complexities, and risks associated with memorialisation. Instead, the articles mostly reflect a range of expected benefits and positive attributes that people associate with memorialisation, presenting a predominantly hopeful and positive image of memorialisation. This runs the risk of producing unrealistic expectations as to what memorialisation can do and bring to individuals and societies recovering from traumatic and violent pasts. In order for memorialisation to indeed have a positive impact on a society and individuals, it should however be dealt with carefully and it is important to also be aware of potential negative consequences of such acts. More concretely, practitioners could attempt to make sure that no unrealistic expectations are maintained with regard to practices of memorialisation due to a lack of awareness of the complexities of commemorating past violence or conflict.

Second, this study also provides important insights for practitioners engaged in memorialisation practices in northern Uganda – including for the implementation of the Ugandan NTJP, which also refers to memorialisation – as well as in other post-conflict contexts. This study has shown that ideas about the role of memorialisation in post-conflict societies can be very diverse, and

that these ideas are shaped by (post-conflict) circumstances in which individuals find themselves. This supports the view that there is not one approach to memorialisation that works best in all situations. As such, this study sheds light on the importance of recognising and taking into account the diversity of perspectives on memorialisation in a given setting when working on memorialisation initiatives. Different expectations and purposes can exist alongside each other without necessarily being conflicting. Practitioners working on memorialisation in post-conflict settings should therefore take into account as much as possible perspectives and understandings with regard to memorialisation of the people they aim to serve. This could involve shaping memorialisation initiatives in such a way that they can accommodate and provide space for their use for multiple purposes.

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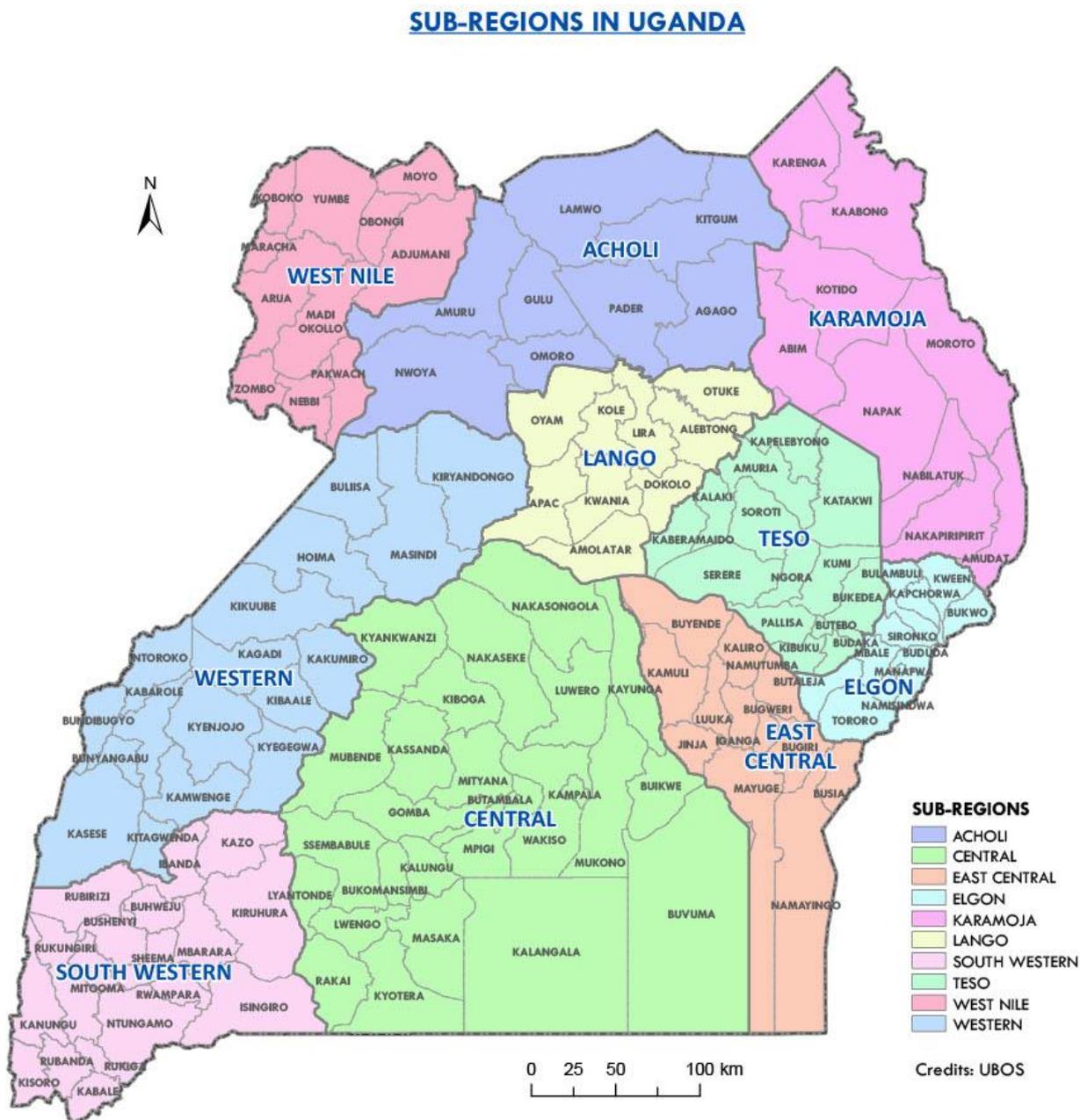
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Appendix A: Maps



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
 Creation: 12 May 2020 Sources: UBOS Feedback: IM Team Uganda (ugakaimug@unhcr.org) | UNHCR BO KAMPALA

Figure A1. Map of sub-regions and districts in Uganda. From UNHCR, 2020.



Figure A2. Map of Acholi and Lango sub-regions with major towns. Adapted from Castelein, 2014, p. xii.

Appendix B: List of news articles

#	Reference	News agency	Title	Author	Date
1	“Another holiday not”, 2015	The Observer	Another holiday not a good idea	<i>Unknown</i>	2015/02/18
2	“In brief”, 2007	New Vision	In brief	<i>Unknown</i>	2007/04/03
3	“Modern army a recipe”, 2012	New Vision	Modern army a recipe for peace - Museveni	<i>Unknown</i>	2012/04/23
4	“News in brief”, 2008	New Vision	News in brief	<i>Unknown</i>	2008/02/12
5	“News in brief”, 2011	New Vision	News in brief	<i>Unknown</i>	2011/08/18
6	“Northern war museum planned”, 2010	New Vision	Northern war museum planned	<i>Unknown</i>	2010/10/12
7	“Promoting our dark”, 2014	Daily Monitor	Promoting our dark history for tourism	<i>Unknown</i>	2014/10/13
8	“Sh2m raised for memorial”, 2010	New Vision	Sh2m raised for memorial college	<i>Unknown</i>	2010/04/22

9	“St. Mary’s Aboke mourns”, 2007	New Vision	St. Mary's Aboke mourns	<i>Unknown</i>	2007/10/09
10	“Today in pictures”, 2019	New Vision	Today in pictures	<i>Unknown</i>	2019/12/06
11	“Uganda needs war”, 2015	Daily Monitor	Uganda needs war memorial cemetery	<i>Unknown</i>	2015/01/03
12	A. Otto, 2018	URN	Govt to Establish Memorial on Uganda's Dark History	Alex Otto	2018/05/21
13	Apunyo 2018	New Vision	Barlonyo massacre commemoration postponed	Hudson Apunyo	2018/02/22
14	Atubo, 2005	New Vision	In memory of the Barlonyo massacre	Omara Atubo	2005/02/20
15	B. Odongo, 2011	New Vision	UPDF pays tribute to civilians	Bonney Odongo	2011/02/10
16	Baligema, 2014	New Vision	Mama Irene Gleeson: gone but not forgotten	Isaac Baligema	2014/06/27
17	Baligema, 2015	New Vision	Kitgum to remember mama Irene Gleeson	Isaac Baligema	2015/07/06
18	Balikuddembe, 2020	Daily Monitor	For LRA victims in northern Uganda, justice is too slow	William Odinga Balikuddembe	2020/02/08
19	Draku, 2011a	URN	Cash strapped Kitgum postpones Mucwini Massacre Memorial Service	Franklin Ezaruku Draku	2011/07/25
20	Draku, 2011b	URN	Kitgum Education Officials Peeved by Construction of War Memorial Museum	Franklin Ezaruku Draku	2011/03/26
21	Draku, 2011c	URN	Mucwini Massacre Memorial Service called Off Indefinitely Due To Lack of Funds	Franklin Ezaruku Draku	2011/09/06

22	Draku, 2012	URN	Kitgum War Memorial Centre's Lessons Ignored by Ugandans	Franklin Ezaruku Draku	2012/09/11
23	Ebong & Otwii, 2019	Daily Monitor	200 people still missing 15 years after Barlonyo attack	Patrick Ebong & Isaac Otwii	2019/02/25
24	Emma, 2012	URN	Human Rights Body Renews Call For LRA Release Of Abducted Children	Akena Emma	2012/11/20
25	Francis, 2018	New Vision	Legacy of conflict in Northern Uganda: To Forget or to Remember?	Nono Francis	2018/05/24
26	I. A. Otto, 2020a	Daily Monitor	Accounts of Atiak bloodbath: The dead still scare the living	Irene Abalo Otto	2020/03/12
27	I. A. Otto, 2020b	Daily Monitor	Opige's left leg was buried at his home	Irene Abalo Otto	2020/03/10
28	I. A. Otto, 2020c	Daily Monitor	Widows stranded with orphans born in camps, captivity 15 years later	Irene Abalo Otto	2020/03/12
29	I. A. Otto, 2020d	Daily Monitor	Children who braved LRA death traps to attend school	Irene Abalo Otto	2020/03/13
30	Immaculate, 2020a	URN	Gov't to Compensate Lango War Victims Next Financial Year	Amony Immaculate	2020/02/05
31	Immaculate, 2020b	URN	Minister Orders for Quarterly Report of Abia Seed School Construction	Amony Immaculate	2020/02/06
32	Jaramogi, 2010	New Vision	War museum to cost sh500m	Patrick Jaramogi	2010/10/17
33	Kamukama, 2017	Daily Monitor	Dark tourism, an untapped gem	Eronie Kamukama	2017/03/19
34	Kato, 2019	Daily Monitor	LRA victims tell their accounts of living with bomb fragments	Joseph Kato	2019/01/31

35	Kwo, 2019	Daily Monitor	The agony of families with missing persons	Jimmy Kwo	2019/08/01
36	Labeja, 2013	URN	Pajong Clan Demands UGX 160 Million Over Mucwini Massacre	Peter Labeja	2013/12/05
37	Labeja, 2015a	URN	Kitgum Hosts International Day of the Disappeared	Peter Labeja	2015/09/01
38	Labeja, 2015b	URN	ICRC Marks Day of the Disappeared	Peter Labeja	2015/08/31
39	Labeja, 2016a	URN	Gulu 'Night Commuter' Centres Neglected	Peter Labeja	2016/08/18
40	Labeja, 2016b	URN	Decade of Peace Passes Quietly in Northern Uganda	Peter Labeja	2016/10/07
41	Labeja, 2017	URN	Charity Launches Massive Clean Up in Kitgum Municipality	Peter Labeja	2017/07/07
42	Labeja, 2018a	URN	Two Peace Negotiators Killed by LRA Remembered	Peter Labeja	2018/01/12
43	Labeja, 2018b	URN	Another Memorial Vocational Institute to Be Built in Nwoya	Peter Labeja	2018/01/15
44	Labeja, 2018c	URN	Atiak to Profile 1995 Massacre Victims	Peter Labeja	2018/08/30
45	Labeja, 2019	URN	Activists Renew Campaign For Honouring Victims of Post Independence Violence	Peter Labeja	2019/10/23
46	Lekuru, 2016	URN	Kitgum to Document Missing Persons	Annet Lekuru	2016/08/25
47	lubangakene & Moro, 2011	New Vision	Acholi urged to shun rebellion	C. lubangakene & Justin Moro	2011/04/25
48	Lubangakene, 2009	New Vision	Priests warns on witchcraft	Cornes Lubangakene	2009/04/30
49	Mao, 2007	New Vision	Bukenya asks Kony to resume peace talks	Ali Mao	2007/02/22
50	Masinde, 2015	New Vision	Lango honours victims of Barlonyo massacre	Andrew Masinde	2015/10/01
51	Mugalu, 2014	The Observer	Kitgum names road after Australian woman	Moses Mugalu	2014/06/22

52	Mugero, 2018	Daily Monitor	Justice for victims of enforced disappearances long overdue	Jesse Mugero	2018/09/03
53	Musinguzi, 2013a	The Observer	Barlonyo massacre: nine years later	Bamaturaki Musinguzi	2013/01/20
54	Musinguzi, 2013b	The Observer	Recollections of the Aboke girls abduction	Bamaturaki Musinguzi	2013/01/31
55	Nabusayi , 2007	New Vision	Sad memories of the Barlonyo massacre	Linda Nabusayi	2007/04/01
56	Nono, 2018	New Vision	Let Uganda embrace 'Dark tourism' to attract more visitors	Francis Nono	2018/10/25
57	Oboi, 2011	New Vision	Kitgum war museum opened	Wokorach Oboi	2011/04/07
58	Ochola, 2014	New Vision	Ocampo to renew Barlonyo massacre probe	Dominic Ochola	2014/03/22
59	Ochola, 2018	URN	Omot Massacre Survivors Decry Unfulfilled Gov't Pledges	Dominic Ochola	2018/10/22
60	Ochola, 2019	URN	Pader Families Seek Justice for Relatives Killed in 1990	Dominic Ochola	2019/02/28
61	Ocowum, 2009	New Vision	Peace centre to be set up in Gulu	Chris Ocowum	2009/12/02
62	Ocowun, 2007	New Vision	Repent, Odama tells LRA	Chris Ocowun	2007/03/26
63	Ocowun, 2009a	New Vision	Army builds LRA victims monument	Chris Ocowun	2009/02/11
64	Ocowun, 2009b	New Vision	Dutch envoy wants LRA rebels punished	Chris Ocowun	2009/07/16
65	Ocowun, 2010	New Vision	LRA massacre victims call for help	Chris Ocowun	2010/09/08
66	Ocungi, 2017	Daily Monitor	Govt to build Luwum memorial centre	Julius Ocungi	2017/02/17
67	Ocungi, 2019a	URN	Kitgum Gears Up for Irene Gleeson Commemoration	Julius Ocungi	2019/07/18
68	Ocungi, 2019b	URN	Acholi Chief Roots for Evidence-Based Culture Documentation	Julius Ocungi	2019/09/21

69	Ocungi, 2019c	URN	Peace Centre in Kitgum Documents Dark Memories Of LRA Atrocities	Julius Ocungi	2019/09/13
70	Ocungi, 2019d	URN	Forced to Cook Human Body Parts; A Survivor's Tale of the LRA Omot Massacre	Julius Ocungi	2019/10/23
71	Ocungi, 2019e	URN	Clerics Snub Omot Massacre Memorial Prayers in Agago	Julius Ocungi	2019/10/23
72	Ocungi, 2019f	URN	250 LRA Insurgency Victims Remembered in Pader	Julius Ocungi	2019/12/08
73	Ocungi, 2020	URN	LRA Victims Call For Psycho-social Support	Julius Ocungi	2020/01/28
74	Ocuwun & Namutebi, 2007	New Vision	Acholi MPs compiling LRA atrocities	Chris Ocuwun & Joyce Namutebi	2007/07/05
75	Ocuwun & Ojwee, 2007	New Vision	Suspend warrants, say LRA team	Chris Ocuwun & Denis Ojwee	2007/11/07
76	Ojara, 2008	URN	Gulu District Constructs Peace Monument in Honour of LRA Victims	Peter Ojara	2008/06/12
77	Ojwee, 2009	New Vision	Religious leaders urge Kony to release kids	Dennis Ojwee	2009/03/30
78	Oketch, 2011	Daily Monitor	Lira to get Shs400m memorial institute	Bill Oketch	2011/06/13
79	Oketch, 2019	Daily Monitor	LRA war victims seek counselling	Bill Oketch	2019/12/11
80	Okino, 2008	New Vision	Slain Aboke girls remembered	Patrick Okino	2008/10/14
81	Olaka, 2007	URN	Government to Construct LRA Historical Monument in Lango	Denis Olaka	2007/06/11
82	Olaka, 2016a	URN	Former Aboke Students In Fundraising Drive	Denis Olaka	2016/10/11

83	Olaka, 2016b	URN	Over Ugx 4 Billion Needed to Beautify Heritage Sites in Lango	Denis Olaka	2016/09/26
84	Olaka, 2017a	URN	Barlonyo Massacre Survivors Still Waiting on Museveni Pledges	Denis Olaka	2017/03/07
85	Olaka, 2017b	URN	Barlonyo Memorial Technical School Struggles to Operate	Denis Olaka	2017/02/22
86	Olaka, 2017c	URN	Lango Leaders Dispute Barlonyo Attack Records	Denis Olaka	2017/02/22
87	Oleny, 2014	New Vision	I saw my people gang-raped, butchered at Barlonyo	Solomon Oleny	2014/02/24
88	Oloch, 2004	New Vision	Govt Mourns Barlonyo Dead	James Oloch	2004/03/28
89	Oluput & Odyek, 2004	New Vision	MPs declare north disaster area	Milton Olupot & John Odyek	2004/02/25
90	Ono, 2007	URN	Acholi Community Commemorates Atiak Massacre	John Muto Ono	2007/04/23
91	Onyango, 2018	URN	Kadaga to Gov't: Account For Missing Lwala Girls	Joseph Eigu Onyango	2018/08/11
92	Owor Ogora, 2012	Daily Monitor	Victims in northern Uganda need reparations, not cash handouts	Lino Owor Ogora	2012/06/12
93	R. Odongo, 2009a	URN	Survivors of Barlonyo Massacre Ignore Memorial Service Again	Ronald Odongo	2009/02/23
94	R. Odongo, 2009b	URN	Monument in Honor of LRA Abductees is Inaugurated	Ronald Odongo	2009/03/30
95	R. Odongo, 2011	URN	Aboke Parents Want Gov't To Trace Missing Girl	Ronald Odongo	2011/10/11
96	R. Odongo, 2012a	URN	Abia War Survivors Ask Government to Construct Monument	Ronald Odongo	2012/12/27

97	R. Odongo, 2012b	URN	Lango Chief Wants To Manage Barlonyo Memorial Site	Ronald Odongo	2012/05/18
98	R. Odongo, 2013	URN	Lango Cultural Institution Fails to Take Over Barlonyo Memorial Site	Ronald Odongo	2013/12/12
99	R. Odongo, 2014	URN	200 Students Stranded As Barlonyo Memorial Institute Fails To Open	Ronald Odongo	2014/03/07
100	R. Odongo, 2014	URN	Former ICC chief prosecutor offers legal service for War victims in Northern Uganda	Ronald Odongo	2014/03/22
101	R. Odongo, 2015a	URN	Lira District Fails to Redevelop Historical Sites	Ronald Odongo	2015/04/01
102	R. Odongo, 2015b	URN	Lira Seeks Tourism Board Support On Historical Sites	Ronald Odongo	2015/09/28
103	R. Odongo, 2019a	URN	Barlonyo Massacre Site to Become Tourist Attraction	Ronald Odongo	2019/02/22
104	R. Odongo, 2019b	URN	Barlonyo Massacre Survivors Want Camp Turned into Tourism Site	Ronald Odongo	2019/02/21
105	R. Odongo, 2019c	URN	Water Crisis Hits Barlonyo Memorial Site	Ronald Odongo	2019/02/23
106	Ssegawa, 2011	Daily Monitor	Government gazettes four IDP camps for tourism	Mike Ssegawa	2011/06/21
107	URN, 2016	The Observer	War survivors demand hospital	URN	2016/03/04
108	Wacha, 2006	URN	Barlonyo Memorial Service Flops	Joe Wacha	2006/03/27

109	Wacha, 2007	URN	Security Tight for Barlonyo Massacre Memorial	Joe Wacha	2007/02/20
110	Wacha, 2010	URN	Atiak Massacre Survivors Relive Memory	Joe Wacha	2010/04/21
111	Wacha, 2011a	URN	Wait for Abducted Aboke Girls Still on	Joe Wacha	2011/09/21
112	Wacha, 2011b	URN	Lukodi Massacre Victims Struggle To Live With Memories	Joe Wacha	2011/05/27
113	Wacha, 2011c	URN	Atiak Community Struggles to Live with Memory of 1995 Massacre Victims	Joe Wacha	2011/04/20

Table B1. List of news articles analysed for this study, include the in-text references used in chapter 5.

