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## **The Living Archive as Pedagogy: A Conceptual Case Study of Northern Uganda**

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### **Abstract**

The study explores the processes involved in interlinking the independent disciplines of archiving and pedagogy by opening their boundaries to achieve a transformative education horizon that widens the expression of a post-conflict bottom-up engagement. The research co-participates with the Acholi community of Northern Uganda, a people caught in the predatory atrocities of the Lord Resistance Army and National Resistance Army 1986-2008. The Acholi's lived experience in up-againstness in this study foregrounds the agency to locate a body returning to their humanness and forming knowledge from below in spaces that exclude them. The research facilitates a hermeneutical encounter with specific inscribed bodies of post-conflict experience, the Acholi and Wanjiku whose bodies archive a horizon of possibilities if a different and difficult reading of the world is done from locations of struggle to produce consciousness of re-becoming or returning to the human. These pedagogical experiences position Acholi and Wanjiku as educators, and their lives a *living archive*.

**Key words:** Acholi, Conceptualization, Living Archive, Pedagogy, Northern- Uganda

### **Introduction**

*Living archive as pedagogy: A conceptual case study in Northern Uganda* explores how to comprehend a bottom-up practice of archiving and pedagogy in an existing post-conflict context. The study is centered in Northern Uganda's war period of 1986-2008, between the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and the National Resistance Army/ Movement (NRA/M), which is today's Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). The

LRA, a Christian fundamentalist group led by Joseph Kony, rebelled against Acholi's suppression and atrocities committed by the ruling government (Jjuuko and Kirabira, 2023). The civilian population in the North (Acholi, Lango, Teso) bore the brunt of the horrific consequences of the war. The Acholi sub-region became the epicenter of the war and virtually no one from the Acholi community remained untouched by the violence (Craine, 2023; Atkinson, 2009), they became the chief victims. They suffered protracted predatory violence and disproportionate brutality from the main protagonists, the Government soldiers, NRA and LRA (Jjuuko and Kirabira, 2023). The years of conflict uprooted them from their homes, causing prolonged displacement in villages that mirrored living in social torture concentration camps and conditions (Dolan, 2009). A comprehensive and inclusive justice system, to account for the Acholi's systematic killings, land grabs, destruction of their culture, identity, and self-worth has been deficient, making the Acholi slaves through a silent genocide (Otunnu, 2009).

While the context of this war risks being schematically clustered as Africa's post-independence wars, and anarchy, the Government and LRA held ideologies in the interest of the country by claiming that they would transform Uganda and fulfill the promise of a new era (Buckley-Zistel, 2008). Therefore, the military strategy was intervention to implement domestic political action regarding; free Uganda from Africa's postcolonial vulnerability of military coups, 1957-1984 (Kposowa & Jenkins, 1993) to change the past political divides and grievances, repressive regimes, failing and failed socio-economic structures, coups, and conflicts (Afako, 2020) that were predominant features of Uganda and across neighboring and regional borders. An unprecedented complexity of the war surfaced with the formation of New Acholi/ Acholi A, a new sociopolitical order (Craine, 2023; Finnstrom, 2008) created by Joseph Kony. This action then and currently radically violates the *idée fixe* of how we define sovereignty, the state or a nation. The formation of Acholi A or New Acholi falls into political creations studied as 'pure' or 'purified' nation/s reimagined as "...new world, a utopian society that is populated of new men and new women, revolutionary beings uncontaminated by any semblance of the old" (Kaplan, 2010, p.2). Joseph Kony argues that the Acholi A, deserve and are the lawful heirs of democracy and peace in post-colonial Africa (Cakaj, 2016; Jjuuko and Kirabira, 2023). Objectively, this utopian creation has been critiqued as "radicalization of war ...turn[ed] inwards, becom[ing] particularistic, localistic and centered on the perfection and purification of a nation ... [through] a tribal group" (Kaplan, 2001, p.1).

The perpetual dismissal of Joseph Kony as a political actor of no consequence locally and internationally failed to restrict the Northern Uganda war within its local boundaries. Abducted Acholi in the LRA military bases in Sudan destabilized Northern Uganda. They also became a proxy group through an alliance with the Khartoum- Sudan government to fight the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who were fighting Khartoum-Sudan (Acoli, 2021; Dunn, 2004) for an autonomous South Sudan. Presently, the utopia of an Acholi A exists in a few African states lacking the capacity to protect their citizens and secure their boundaries. LRA has viciously abducted and consistently recruited extremely young children into militancy; all the while Joseph Kony has evaded capture and defeat through national, regional, and international military efforts (Afako, 2020). The Acholi A has over the years spread from Northern Uganda to South Sudan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) as an active rebel group (Cakaj, 2016; Craine, 2023). The complexity of ever resolving this war through extensive local, regional, or international action, historicizes this experience in what Soyinka, (2016, p.4) describes as brutal civil wars in the continent, "with unique horrors, the harvest of child soldiers who ... plague the continent, [and have] wiped clean the most basic humane sensibilities". An official communique to confirm the end of the war remains nonexistent, whilst communities in Northern Uganda are of the opinion that the war is not over, and the silencing of the guns is not proof of sustainable peace (Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity, 2013).

The study's attention towards Acholi's lived experiences in Northern Uganda is not meant to unsee or minimize war encounters of non- Acholi communities, Acholi A in exile, non-Ugandan communities affected by the cycles of overt conflict in every regime change. In fact, the study acknowledges the institutionalization of violence and coercion as a reign to preserve the "social, political and religious processes, the strategic interests of both political elites and rebel insurgents" (Kustenbauder, 2010, p.452).

Since the first political violence in 1966 (Ojok, 2022) the State's response to any of these violent regime changes is unfinished and subjective, delaying and denying how the communities recover, remember, engage, and demand for action (Herman, 2015). For these reasons, Northern Uganda and other regions are left to continuously commune in unaddressed legacies of overt conflict (Oola, 2019).

The return to Northern Uganda and locating the Acholi is a point of entry and enquiry on how to differently understand the practice of archives and pedagogy in post-conflict. Traditionally archiving conducted in the contexts of war to post-conflict transitions, produces information that legitimizes what is mourned (Derrida, 1995) what is defined as knowledge, historical memory, the recognition of forms of power and its contestation among other possibilities (Luhe, Viebach, Hovestadt, Ott, & Thorne, 2018). This archiving methodology, we argue, is detached from the Acholi survivor-victims landscape from below that demonstrates their unrecognized realities, unspoken complexities, willful exclusions, and complicities. The decision for the research to explore a pedagogical output is not an opposition to multifarious disciplines and knowledge outcomes done globally in the arena of war, security, peace studies or conflict resolution. Nonetheless, this pedagogical direction aims to understand how the Acholi teach and learn understand[ing] from below (Spivak, 2006), as a construction that counters "exploitation, repression, domination and are able to speak and act" (Spivak, 2006, p. 68). To anticipate a pedagogical engagement that represents the Acholi's understanding, partly lays the foundation of them actualizing their full humanness within the world (Freire, 1975).

The study *living archive as pedagogy* proposes to conceptualize a different type of post-conflict repository. This begins by considering the following positions:

- An expanded reference to the Acholi (beyond individual, community, geography) as inscribed bodies that evolve non-dominant knowledge of unfamiliar complex post-war configurations.
- The inscribed bodies as mirroring all manner of power relations experienced and the bodies existing as text with evidence of war mutilations, painful-humiliating oppressions, and continuous living with oppressors in physical spaces that they cannot detach from.

The study uses the concept "Up againstness" borrowed from Butler (2012, p.34), as part of the researchers' recognition of the revulsion that the Acholi faced in surviving the war, and how this affects their post-war recovery. Butler's work informs this study to view the inscribed Acholi without the gaze of appearing silenced but finding active forms of language or dialogue. Up againstness illuminates spaces occupied by precarious bodies living in unwilling adjacency that is not of their choice, having to incessantly respond to people's solicitations in languages that they may not understand or even wish to understand. From the above directing accounts, adequate response on how to conceptualize *living archive as pedagogy* becomes a critical interpretation of the Acholi reclaiming their humanity, agency, and claiming a second post-independence liberation where they can "feel themselves in the unspeakable, forbidden and dangerous" (Casper & Wertheimer, 2016, p. 56). Hence the aim of this study was to provide a conceptualization of the living archive as pedagogy.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

This section of the article supports the overarching frame of the study on how the Acholi can represent themselves using archiving and pedagogy for their agency, reclaimed humanity, and liberation within their spaces of struggle. The theoretical frame *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* by Jacques Derrida (1995) is applied to understand the materiality of archives. The immediate gap that arises, for this study, is to establish any archival knowledge that would affirm or meaningfully open theoretical boundaries, where Acholi's post-conflict archives can be read as a living archive typology. This was not an automatic reveal; existing body of literature signal the need to logically prove the existence of such an archive. This demand arises from the perspective that living archives are a recent developing genre, spread across different

interests, disciplines (Sabiescu, 2020) and often associated with global multiplicities of a subaltern identity (Abdulhadi, 2015).

Derrida's (1995) scholarship on archives formulated three decades ago is a proactive call to re-read the archive. His theory comes from studying what is positioned as the original archive in Europe, and the outcomes of Europe owning this archive in its modernity period. A more accurate account of Derrida's work is that there is evidence of the first archive being in Greece, but Europe kidnapped this archive to pervasively rank themselves most superior in matters of knowledge production and culture (Gordon, 2014). This abduction of the archive from its original creators strategically endorsed Europe as a site of truth, custodian of historic truth in modern world (Jenkinson, 1992) and expanded their power. The archive privileged Europe as having imperial linguistic reality that permitted them "to colonize non-European histories and create a place for themselves as heirs of the world's different civilizations" (Gordon, 2014, p. 110).

The Eurocentric archive has influenced a standardization of archivization, where preferred identities, institutions and power centers that exist in an above landscape, are preserved. A critical re-read of the Eurocentric archive, we argue, is an act towards finding a responsive post-conflict archive, that opens more to the struggles from below in the form of preserving truth, justice, and language that reclaims. Derrida (1995) argues that the function of an archive beyond the Eurocentric model, should contravene the hegemonic structure for purposes of better judgment, diversification of consciousness, and for archives to have a duty to historic truth and justice. Mbembe (2015) significantly grounds the archive as a site intertwined with everyday political actions. This is expounded by the emphasis of the archive being functional within publicness; therefore, according to Mbembe (2015), the archive should be in a public space, openly accessed by the public/people (Sabiescu, 2020). The diverse material of the archive made public in his argument signals a society's ability to extend democratic projects and spaces (Mbembe, 2015). The association of archives to democracy, favorably supports why the Acholi's lived experiences should be part of a post-conflict recovery archive. Mbembe's (2015) notion of linking archives to democracy, is not far-fetched, rather an intellectual insight of people using their tools that represent them publicly. Therefore, establishing the archive as a public tool by the people to represent them in building or extending a democratic dispensation (resilience, society's interest benefitting common public, in favor of democracy).

Having attentively examined key dynamics of the archive, there remains an inherent indissociable principle of the death drive (Derrida, 1995). The death drive mimics instinctual life (Freud, 1961), a principle familiar to the human condition that self-distracts due to aggression over building or preserving (Lee, 2010). What this suggests of any archive is that there exists a futility to destroy the archive, and this is its nature. How scholars address the death drive is varied, for instance Mbembe (2015) addresses this aggression of the archive by naming the death drive process as the imbalance between secrecy/ withdrawal and the availability of records. Mbembe (2015) notes that a public archive will also have some of its documents kept in secrecy or withdrawn. Possibly, an act and decision of the archivist, the wear and tear of documents or decisions by authority. The death drive radiates outwardly and directly impacts communities (Lee, 2010), more so for the identities made unheard, historically omitted (Abdulhadi, 2015). We argue that while the archive may be aggressive, it probes the relationship that the Acholi and other identities from below, create with the archive.

We hold the view that the aggression of the archive to, at some point, face the death drive, does not paralyze identities from landscapes of below. Their lives are in constant skewed cycles of erasure rather than preservation. The significance for them to exist in an archive responsive to them, is almost a solidarity act by publics exiled from the Eurocentric archive to fiercely protect and honor their truth (Alvarado, 2020) in archives, to archive their below- survival, trauma, memory history, memorabilia (Lee, 2010) that are consigned for erasure rather than preservation. The erasure vs preserve is a specific layer of how the death drive confronts the Acholi and proves the inevitability of sub-human or invisible identities to act by making themselves visible, as archivists who can determine their future in their own terms.

### Conceptual Outlining

The integration of a conceptual frame in the study is meant to accomplish knowledge outcome/s that are of an autonomous or higher description (Jackson, 2015) and that can disrupt the normative ways of acquiring knowledge (Hodge, 2019). The presence of concepts or conceptual philosophies in human lives and experiences reflect a resistance to compulsive repetitions in the form of practices or arrangements that no longer serve society (Hurst, 2011). From an epistemic view, concepts are constructs purposed to give a model or a narrative to complex, changing societies (Hogan, 2019). In addressing the dimension of pedagogy in the study, this section links concepts with transformative education as knowledge frames with an emancipatory commitment (Hodge, 2019) for bodies in vulnerability or reduced to redundancy in contemporary life (Sabiescu, 2020). This linking deeply accentuates the urgency of people and knowledge breaking from limited ways of being in the world and understanding meaning to implement a process of change.

Identifying how transformative education is applicable to bodies of vulnerability or from below identities, this pedagogical work confronts aggression that emerges from the priorities of the global market over the deep needs of society (Baker, 2020). Consequently, learning and teaching outcomes from a transformative design, provide an emancipatory language with the impetus to make peace and work towards social justice, decolonization, social cohesion, solidarity among other expressions as examples of our true selves in the world (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2013) as we strip the status quo and inactive acts of transgression (Kulundu- Bolous , McGarry, & Lotz-Sisitika, 2020) that serve to exile people.

The merging of concepts and transformative education shift and awaken our linguistic and cultural capital, for meaningful interpretations to authentically enable us to use our power and to participate in power relations (Bird, 2010). We argue that concepts and transformative education jolts us to embody being, that is the body that is designated invisible, not relevant in history or having historical value. Their moral value is excluded for they are sub-humans encoded as being troublesome and their psychological, psychoanalytic, or linguistic dimension has always been omitted (Foucault , 1977). Embodying being centers their intent for *raison d'être*, desirability, social-political life (Wang & Tucker, 2017) in their locations of struggle. Haraway (1988) describes this embodying to be the permission to view or imagine oneself as a body with a point of view. At this point we introduce a conceptual being named Wanjiku to the study. She appears in the study as an educator, learner, archivist who opens the boundaries around understand[ing] complex post-conflict life. Wanjiku does not replace the Acholi but integrates herself into their experiences and embodies Acholi's intent to reclaim their humanity, assert their agency, and their desire for a second post-independence liberation.

### Wanjiku's Landscape of Below

Wanjiku is a popular feminine name in Kenya- East Africa (Uganda, Rwanda), this name symbolizes the most ordinary individual within the society whose life is seen as 'incalculable' or 'unrepresentable' (Osberg, Biesta , & Cilliers , 2008) in the country. Her living conditions mirror the landscape from below, a space for the "marginalized, disposed, uprooted and disposed", where their reality, "history, memories or perceptions fit uncomfortably" with what has been preserved with "narratives of progress, technological change and improvements" (Whyte, 2013, p.5). The origin of this symbolized naming coincides with Kenya's constitutional reform process in the 1990's where citizens lobbied for a new constitution under an autocratic state. The president of the time was not in favor of the reforms as this political move threatened to turn the *de jure* one-party state into a multiparty system (Cottrell & Ghai, 2007). The president in dismissing ordinary citizenry participation in a process of state building and democratic consolidation remarked:

*"Do you think Wanjiku understands what a constitution is? The voters throughout the public gave members of parliament the mandate to make the constitution. Then how can these members of parliament...go back to Wanjiku and ask her to show is the way on how to write the constitution of Kenya? ... What kind of game is this?"(KTN, 2010).*



This speech activated the being and embodiment of Wanjiku, who emerges from the gaze of her own president. This body experiences firsthand the consequences of othering and exclusion by the state, institutions, elite and individuals. Wanjiku keeps on reappearing from below as multi-racial, regional, gendered, generational, religious, and having community (Shitemi & Kamara, 2014) and cultural diversity. Despite this plasticity of body, Wanjiku's self-representation is ordered within the confines of 'less'. Wanjiku's body is inscribed as lesser elite, less educated, less voice, body, least value and security. Consequently, those above the lesser, like the president endorse Wanjiku as "a person seen, never spoken to, never queried, but instead simply spoken about and, at best ordered..." (Gordon, 2015). This is in itself a form of epistemic closure and injustice inhibiting their authentic expression as a living body in their own conditions of below, ambiguities and contestations.

Wanjiku and the inscribed Acholi body have similar likeness; they come from sites with non-normative and non-dominant ways of both knowing and being. Their presence in the study and in actual life, counters the aggression of knowing or learning from unprivileged bodies. The rigor of their under-stand[ing] from below may be probed for truth, trustworthiness, authenticity for their instinct, to be conveyors of knowledge and transformation outside Western universality where the act of transformation is meant to impact individuals, yet the Acholi and Wanjiku inspire the transformation of the below through a collective emancipatory frame. This approach persistently rivals Wanjiku's social-political exclusion, Acholi A, Northern Uganda war to be insensitively understood as particularistic, local, contextual, and situational (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Wanjiku and Acholi's contact with a conceptualized archive, is largely shaped by the dynamics of an archive as a public space with predetermined authority to conserve the preserve vs erasure reality (Sabiescu, 2020). These bodies enter the archive unseparated from their below, rejecting to be denied, repressed, forgotten, to disappear or to be nowhere (Baumgarmer, 2018; Haraway, 1988). To counter the aggression of erasure as transformative educators, they need to speak of their below.

Speaking from where I am/ *I speak from where I am* is the positionality description by Wanjiku and the Acholi, which reflects dialogue to name their world (Freire, 1970) without abandoning their inscribed bodies in dwellings of up againstness and from below. The ability to speak or show forms of language as an identity from below is argued to be a form of reply to what is contested, and the showing of inescapable historical contradictions between the dominant identities vs the oppressed (Cabral, 1980). Freire (1970) argues that dialogue, opens the process of active listening that involves a communication strategy of; *speak to, speak with, without speaking against*. These forms of speech by the marginalized identity should be reciprocated with dialogue that "validates social and education experience of marginalized groups" (Dotson, 2014, p.126).

Using the position of *I speak where I am* permits Acholi and Wanjiku to *speak to* the post-conflict archive over the absence of their inscribed bodies as a form of language for the archive. Their inclusion to the post-conflict archive is seen as different archons/archivists compared to institutions, multi-professionals at both international and national level administering a post-conflict archive (international criminal court, department of justice, commissioners, judges, lawyers, police/military, medical doctors, human rights activists etc). This builds into the research motive of defining itself as a living archive typology, which is illuminated in the discussion section of this paper. *I speak where I am*, is part of dialogue that is interpretative, meant to expand the horizons of our thinking, and enable patterns of meaning that reveal knowing differently. This dialogue position is, however, not limited to Acholi and Wanjiku's interaction (*speak to*) with the archive and transformative pedagogical practices. The audience of this study, become part of the dialogue as *willing hearer* (Fricker, 2008) or listener, who witness the lucid representation of the interlocutors as they disrupt absences, open interpretation, reconstruct and rehistoricize their exclusion (Booth, 2006). This act of *willing hearers* extends solidarity to actively witness the Acholi reclaiming their humanity, agency, and claiming a second post-independence liberation. In concluding the discussion on the finding of Wanjiku from below, this concept in the form of a body provides insights to location/s of possible reciprocal dialogue and collective learning of knowing of selves, and the radical representation and reformulation of the body beyond hegemonic social orders.

### Methodology

The study is conducted within the structure of a qualitative, exploratory single- case study. This innately serves to establish patterns of meaning derived from the Acholi's lived experience of both war and post-conflict. An additional extension to the methodology is the adoption of a conceptual case analysis, to address the primary research objective on how to conceptualize *living archive as pedagogy*, an area unfamiliar in research. This conceptual emphasis is a direct response to how research can introduce new concepts lacking in theory, broaden theory and confirm knowledge production as dynamically shaped by human reality (Kosterec, 2016) rather than the verification of existing theories and prior conclusions (Vaismoradi , Jones, Turunen, & Shelgrove , 2016). In conceptualizing *living archive as pedagogy*, the study adopts an echelon of hermeneutics, specifically interpretive hermeneutics. This permits the co-creation between the Acholi research constituent, and the researchers, to describe the world from what is unfamiliar, to value misunderstanding, to disrupt cultural and socio-political contexts as they occur (Sands, 2019; Freeman , 2008). Interpretive hermeneutics acknowledges the complexity of representation among excluded identities, occurring due to structural barriers, and alienation from self-historicization, or denied collective identity mapping (Cifor & Wood, 2017) that shows how they name their world (Freire, 1970).

The different methodology combinations explained, are meant to generatively place the study as an active encounter with the inscribed Acholi bodies, specifically in their landscapes of below in Northern-Uganda, where we retrieve their own documented secondary data in the form of civil society public reports (field, policy), literature review, webinars, social media content, published autobiographies, and socio-cultural performances (songs, stories, poems and dances). The Justice Reconciliation Project (JRP), a community founded non-governmental organization in Gulu- Northern Uganda, has permitted access to this secondary data. The NGO has liberally documented the experience of the war from its inception in 2005, using a grassroots approach, where community volunteers or individuals are actively involved in the archiving of the transition process from war to peace, reparations, transitional justice, and traditional justice in Northern Uganda (McClain & Ngari , 2011).

The processing of the secondary data aims for an interpretative dialogic outcome. This involves coding to depict emotions, values, language, and intensity of action words that surface to describe Acholi's lived reality. This systematic coding activity produces research themes which serve to contrast theory, literature review and provide intellectual blocks on how to achieve conceptualization. The choice of coding is to direct this study or any other related research as an output with the potential for "new and existing directions not previously experienced" (Agrey, 2014, p. 401). The coding themes that emerge as discussed in the subsequent section of this article are part of hermeneutics interpretive dialogic outcome. These themes become the usable material for action reflection of how to open new intellectual horizons, expand inquiry of the research and achieve the conceptualization expectations (Vieira & de Queiroz, 2017).

An adherence to research ethics was followed, as part of committing to research integrity. The research does not make any direct human interface, removing the risk of harm, manipulation, or prejudice towards the Acholi community by the researcher. Guiding principles that overarch the study are the Belmont Ethics Report (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) and the Montreal and Singapore statements of research integrity 2013 and 2010 (The Lancet, 2013). The study utilized measures of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser , 2018) to meet research threshold of trustworthiness and reliability.

### Findings

The themes emerging from this study include autobiographies of dailiness, absence of salt and in-between spaces, which will be discussed in detail as per the themes. These themes were derived from the hermeneutic dialogic process described above.

#### Autobiographies of Dailiness

Accounting for daily life in conflict and post-war, meets both national and international legal norms keen to identify victims in need of rescue (sexual abuse, child-mothers, torture, trauma, fragility, helplessness, and servitude violations) (Nicola, 2014). This innocent victim posture is inaccurate in Uganda's war and military discourse 1986-2008, a period with the most enduring and violent rebel group

in Africa (Baines, 2017). The abducted person is described as “a body that projects justification of war, quest for justice, ...[and] contending political projections” (Baines, 2017, p.4). Why this conjecture of innocence fails as studied by Baines, is that it limits the accounting for complex lived experiences, narrows justice approach, obscures individual, and political agency (Baines, 2017).

We develop the theme *Autobiographies of Dailiness* as an active way to challenge the war as an event happening to people outside humanity or desirability. This deters parties involved from absolved guilt, responsibility and disturbingly bothers us in how to address “the terrible decision to kill or be killed” (Baines, 2017, p.3) as part of complex injustices and victimhood that further worsen “up-againstness” in landscapes from below.

There is an overwhelming performance of violence against the Acholi in the aspiration of both a revolution and democracy. Agamben’s 1998 theorization of performance of violence becomes an intellectual tool that makes exegeses of Northern Uganda as part of what is defined as public arena and its consequences. This contemporary public space intrinsically appears with ritualized repetition of abductions, torture, rape, strangling, femicides, and public dumping of bodies. The presence of a public space as studied by Hannah Arendt (1979) legitimizes the thinking of “everything is possible” an expression that gestures harming of the targeted person/s in eternally bewildering and indefinite methods. Therefore, *Autobiographies of Dailiness in Northern Uganda*, brings us to the predetermined reality of public arenas.

*“You [Acholi/ Wanjiku] are nothing! You see no one cares about you! You are not really a part of our society; at most, you belong to its fringes; you live in a threshold area in which everything is possible. You may be killed but your death is not punishable” (Yanez, 2005, p. 1).*

Statistics from the war indicate that 60,000 children were abducted by the LRA (The New Humanitarian, 2013) in different parts of Northern Uganda; we name a few small towns that emerge from the data (Atiak, Gulu, Kalalo, Aboke, Lukodi). The experience of abduction is deeply ingrained in one’s being, and this memory differs from one person to another. Evelyn Amony abducted from her family’s home in Kalalo recalls this day.

*“It was a day in late August 1994. I was eleven years old. They were wearing combat gear and had just arrived from Sudan. They had been sent to collect young boys and girls, thirteen years old and younger. Earlier in the day, the rebels had captured a young boy and told him to give them the names of children who would be returning home from school later on. The boy ... led them to [our] compound. I went into the hut to remove my school uniform, I could hear them call my name, I did not say anything. They called my name again and looked at me. I told them, I am not the one. My name is Betty Ato. I thought they would not abduct me if I convinced them I was someone else. But they did, and Betty Ato would become my name for the next eleven years” (Amony, 2015, p. 17).*

Evelyn’s abduction is quite similar to what Joyce faced.

*I was abducted together with my old brother. My father died when I was young and our mother struggled to take care of us. Those who abducted us later said they were initially not going to our home, but they were told that there was a young girl in our home. My Mother pleaded with them to leave me because I was young. They told her that if she wanted me back they would give her my corpse. The other girls in the area were not abducted. I was the only one taken. (Apiyo, 2013, p.4).*



The LRA and UPDF fought in specific areas, villages, towns and military bases of Sudan, Uganda, DR-Congo and Central African Republic. These places are discourses as the bush, an area alienated from normal everyday life. Thus, we suggest defining this journey to Sudan and other places/ bushes where the war happens, as an arena of stigma, stripped of moral experience, engulfed in death, diseased, and has inevitable encounter with unappeased powerful spirits. The spirits in Acholi cosmology are recognized as (*cen*), they are spirits of the dead who lacked proper burials. They are angry and are believed to cause death, disease, misfortune, mania and nightmares (Kembel, 2015). The concept of the bush from Acholi cosmology delineates this area as non-habitable for human life and living, “a turbulent ungovernable place where wild animals roam free and formidable cosmological forces work through and above nature” (MacDonald & Kerali, 2020, p. 12). The movement to Sudan and other countries that the LRA infiltrated fits the theorization of Moral Geographies (Smith, 2000) which to a degree overlaps with Judith Butler’s Precarious Life (2004). Both bodies of work invite us to make a reflection on how these spaces can be sites for different action. Smith (2000) specifically questions how these geographies can conceive social justice, while Butler (2004) asks how the public arena can reproduce transformation towards justice. The scholars are aware of the complex association that tags the site; the precarious space is one of vulnerability, death and suffering (Butler, 2004) while the context of moral geographies is isolated because we do not care to know these lives [Acholi] and neither will we take responsibility.

From the Autobiographies of Dailiness, walking to Sudan is a form of unceremonious transition that indispensably changed one. It began with the abducted children looting from the villages or trading centers en route to Sudan. This obligatory loot included farm produce, live cows, goats, fowl, edible rodents, smoked meat, clothing, and medicine (Acan 2017; Apiyo, 2013) which greatly destabilized the communities’ local economy. The LRA brigades in Sudan and Northern Uganda depended on this loot for survival and to protract the war. The journey was fraught with hunger, severe suffering and punishment. With the large number of abductions, there was a sense that the children were sold to the Arabs as slaves, or in exchange for weapons (Acan, 2017; Amony, 2015), while this was untrue, such fears are founded on the history of the Acholi as slaves for the Arabs described in chapter two. Many of “the recruits would die of starvation, cholera, the long tiresome journey, and the risks involved in moving” (Acan, 2017, p. 37) past infantry and gunship attacks.

The failure to walk guaranteed your killing; the loot was of more value than any human life. Moving bare feet among the *Kuruts* was common, as their shoes were taken to be given to those in Sudan, or they did not have them. Walking through challenging topographies; of hot sand, small stones, slippery mountainous areas, deep forest and crossing of swollen huge rivers with or without shoes caused injury, usually the feet would develop wounds that would rot and the stench was unbearable (Amony, 2015). Nearly all abducted persons that made it to Sudan reference this walk (Baines, 2017). There was fast movement of the *kuruts* both day and night, making it difficult for the (UPDF) and Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) to totally defeat the LRA.

*“Every other day as we walked to Sudan there was at least one recruit or more being tortured either because they could no longer walk due to blisters on their legs [most okruts did not have gumboots/shoes] or because they could no longer carry heavy loads given to them. The unlucky ones whose legs could not carry them any more were killed, most especially the boys”* (Acan, 2017, p.44).

*“There were some boys who killed you if they saw that the luggage you were carrying was good [food stuff]. They lured you to rest and as you rested, they killed you and shared your luggage. When your leg was swollen, the young boys called you to rest but if you did, they killed you”* (Apiyo, 2013, p. 6).

These movements by the LRA could take days without resting, and the failure to walk was diagnosed as the ‘no movement’ ailment (Baines, 2017).

*“We moved day and night. At times we would walk while sleeping. You could not say that you were tired”* (Amony, 2015, p.33).

*We could move from morning up to sunset, by the time I made it to Sudan all my toenails had fallen off. The skin on the bottom of my feet was gone. Some Kurut became paralyzed by physical exhaustion but carried on crawling* (Baines, 2017, p.61).

*You know, when the evening comes gumboots stiffen, so I had to heat the gumboots until they softened and I was able to remove them. My Legs had swelled. My feet smelled. I had moved for three days without removing my gumboots* (Amony, 2015, p. 33-34).

Autobiographies of Dailiness, presents itself as an approach aware of multiple identities involved in oppression and its reproduction in the war and post-war. These identities, while indicating the nature of complex victimhood, bring us close to being receptive of the identity *I am what I am*, which we interpret as the choice to define oneself, despite existing judgement, and caveats by different authoritative bodies. *I am what I am* becomes a tool of resistance that radically counters identities that perpetuate guilt; Kony’s wife, Kony’s children, LRA rebels, bush life or Acholi. Accounts of what happened during the war in the autobiographies of dailiness, we argue, bare authenticity that is omitted, denied, silenced or missing from national public archives. Uniquely, the autobiographies of dailiness as documents from living people, present an opportunity to deliberate on and expand the notion of justice away from the classic forms of tribunals, commissions. *I am what I am*, allows us to encounter an identity demonstrating their complicity in causing grievous body, psychological, emotional and environmental scourge in the public arena, to preserve themselves.

### **Awakening by Salt**

The value and access of table salt in a war context is an area of odd interrogation, surviving death, illness, hunger and thirst are the narratives and experiences that rank highly and powerfully tell of a war history. This personal hypothesis was in sharp disparity with the Autobiographies of Dailiness where different authors mentioned salt as part of the everyday organization in war, and directly indicating some form of autonomy. The use of salt varies for spiritual, medicinal, cultural, economic, - gastronomy, symbolism, and language purposes. The study of salt as a mineral with contemporary political impact is infrequent. The discussion of salt in this study comes from the unmeasurable impact over the absence of salt by those undesirably affected first- hand by the LRA and GoU war. The need for salt takes us to the dietary diary of the Acholi captured by the LRA. In times where the LRA were under great pursuit, from the Ugandan or Sudanese government soldiers, as well as villagers seeking revenge, their movement to very interior places was necessary to avoid being killed or captured, but at times, their movement to such remote hiding places was a war strategy to defeat the government soldiers who had little or no food supply.

To survive this terrain, where the LRA would also be lacking food supplies for their soldiers, children and infants, relied on the *Adyebo* a wild bitter plant and wild toxic fruits depending on their availability. Water scarcity was common; the drinking of each other’s urine, dependence on It Lyec/ “elephant ears” vines, whose stems had water, was a scarce alternative. This kind of living did trigger forms of self-preservation, such as hiding little amounts of water in your backpack, which you would infrequently sip in secrecy to delay death (Cakaj, 2016). Nothing ever replaced salt and its value in the landscape from below; we retrace the mention of salt in the read autobiographies, sharing how its presence or absence ordered LRA living for further reflection:

*We looked for wild plants like [adyebo] to cook. We prepared these without salt and ate. These were very difficult moments. (Aling p.18 in Apiyo, 2013)*

*We finally reached the Imatong ranges [South Sudan] for the second time, but there was hardly any food in this place. We preserved cassava root tubers for future use. The food was tasteless without salt but we ate to survive. (Acan, 2017, p.129).*

*A few able boys and girls were selected to go where the Sudanese people were living to loot food from their gardens after fighting them. So we roasted maize ground it to make a little porridge which we added salt to make sauce. That was what we fed on in Apwap for more than two months that we lived there. (Acan, 2017, p.120).*

*One day, I had gone to get local salt (kado atwona) from one of the defenses where my bush husband was living. I kept on gathering the stems of the herb which I was going to burn for the local salt. (Acan, 2017, p.99).*

Jodie recalls her integration into the community as non-rebel. As part of her amnesty process, her starter kit as a civilian from the government included:

*I was given everything to start a house from the rehabilitation center. I was given odii peanut butter) and magadi (soda ash a form of salt) to start my first meal. (Apiyo, 2013, p. 27).*

Awakening through salt intimately arouses rage at an individual level, not as some form of wrenching hate or frustration within the private, but the positioning of rage in the public space of politics that acknowledges we have failed, dishonoured and transgressed (Lloyd, 2019) the Acholi's dignity and their humanity. We unwrap the discussion of rage within the intellectual work of Audre Lorde (1981), 'The Uses of Anger', that allows for the placing of the persistent deep systematic social inequality lived as an area we could legitimately respond to, using anger or rage as an empowerment tool. The presence of rage attests to deep-seated, tasted feelings that have been suppressed, felt and expressed. This rage Lorde cautions is not useless, disruption but one that questions why silence, misnaming, betrayal, and uncritical privilege (Lorde, 1981). In her analysis, rage confirms the injustice of being unchosen and knowing that when we survive [war, xenophobia, racism, homophobia etc] we are taken for granted for our lack of humanness (Lorde, 1981). Anger as part of intense feelings, engages the willing hearer to shift to deep listening, of grief, personal and institutional oppressions inherited and presently occurring causing difference. Of impact is the use of anger as the refusal to accept powerlessness (Lorde, 1981). The emergence of anger through the narrative of salt supports this research to view both salt and anger as forms of radicalness. We may have approached anger from a dialogical perspective, but it is critical to find anger performed through the body (Landry, 2021), the *living archive as pedagogy* partly performs the refusal to be in threadbare narratives and representations previously done. The presence of anger awakened by salt, affirms that we are partaking in political work involving social justice, we are intent in choosing actions that resist domination, the de-politicisation or the invisibility of the Acholi, Wanjiku and other non-desirable groups in a manner that confronts oppression, but also helps people to connect to each other and themselves (Lofton, 2020).

### **In-between spaces**

How I appear' in the in-between spaces of this study, is a negotiation to change the normative contradictions of place, space, and community that reflects privileged inequalities and reproduction of differences (Bhabha, 1994 & Arendt 1979). The study attempts to illustrate in-between spaces, where the appearance of self coexists in anguished contradictory spaces (Bhabha, 1994). This favours the emerging of formulaic lives, formulaic life stories (Baines, 2017) that impact daily living with the stacking of privilege, discrimination, exclusion and inequalities, (Kappler & Lemay- Herbert, 2019). In the context of Northern Uganda 'Where, I appear' or 'Where I am placed' after decades of mass violence is not easily answered individually or by the community. Instead, we witness an imbalance where public information about the past is kept secret, versus a sharp division over questions of who is responsible for what. This in-between costs authentic reclaiming of one's life in the face of historical silence, and negotiating of the present by removing entangled complexities. We borrow a few experiences as documented by Erin Baines and Evelyn Amoy to contextualize formulaic living.

*In 2005, I had asked a group of 20 young men and women in Anaka[ name of place], as part of my research on re-integration and social repair, to brainstorm the plot of [the] play... [They said] We are ready, let us perform. The play consisted of aid workers, journalist, scholars, government officials and the military coming to the group one by one and asking the same set of questions. Date of abduction? Date of return? How old were you? Do you have amnesty... The dramatists then laughed as they continued to act, telling each set of officials the same story of their abduction, but slightly changed each time to respond to what the interviewer had wanted to know. Victimhood-helpless, innocent, injured-became a trope through which the victims reclaimed control...(Baines, 2017.p.xiv-xv)*

The role-play imitates international researchers, writers, photographers, documentary makers, aid workers, religious charities, travellers and a host of other parties (Baines, 2017) who authorize post-conflict living through the "damage centered research where these professionals document people's pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression" (Tuck, 2009, p.413). However, their analysis of these communities is "hopeless, defeated and depleted" (Tuck, 2009, p.409) where mechanisms of justice and redress of the war is seen as the crux of post-conflict life and driven by professionals of these institutions. These efforts fail to generate spectacular living together of communities. The study proposes, to define formulaic living and life as sharing of life experiences in a manner that captures institutional interests and attractiveness. "The availability of rehearsed stories that emphasize victimization", to "avoid judgment but have access to humanitarian resources" while routing away from what is the people's "agency, desire and choices" (Baines, 2017, p.20, p.xvi).

### **Discussion**

*Living archive as pedagogy* situated from the emerging themes, consistently echoes and recognizes typologies of living as follows. The Acholi are living in exclusion due to hierarchical power structures, privilege, and discriminations. The encounter with the Acholi affirms living to include identities that define how they know themselves or what knowledge positions surround them. A few of these forms of knowing positions include; *I am What I am/ I am Who I am, I feel therefore, I can be* (Lorde,2007), *Where I appear, and How I appear/ Where I am placed*. The positions of who they are reaffirm them as educators in resistance, owning responsibility and truth. This validates *living archive as pedagogy* as an epistemic tool defining itself in- *I am what I am/ I am who I am*, as awareness of knowledge from excluded bodies existing in judgement and caveats of different authoritative bodies. *I feel therefore, I can be* is the intimate and delicate work of resistance, to enable the confronting of intentional dehumanization, wrongness and



abandonment, and possibly construct a decolonial future. *How I appear*, as the recognition of prevalent privilege, discrimination that is structural, *where I appear*, as the recognition of speaking yourself into existence in places of intersectionality that are not free and equal. While *Where I am placed*, as the facing of incomprehensible tragic irony of life that remains unresolved, causing subjectivity and formulaic lives.

In the collected secondary data, living archive using the context of Northern Uganda appears as “safe social space created by individual or survivor groups to give testimony and re-story past events of violence or resistance in settings of chronic insecurity” (Riaño- Alcala & Baines, 2011, p. 412). The presence of a living archive counters prevailing insecurity, which threatens the right to life and living. The safe social spaces, producing a living archive, should not be thought of as post-conflict routines of psychological debriefing, community- security meetings or peacebuilding workshops happening in community halls. Instead, this is a safe space as witnessing happens “in day-to-day acts of performative (poetry, song, drama, dance), embodied (scars and physical illness or injury and emotions and memoryscapes (landscape and material markers of memory)” as proposed by Riaño-Alcala and Baine’s (2011, p.413-414). From the data, we include three more acts of safe witnessing such as ceremonies, participation in public politic and identities.

Guided by the foundation laid for safe witnessing, and using secondary data we questioned what the day-to day acts could reveal about the Acholi. Therefore, we conceptualize a living archive as having six acts, each act with a corresponding question of how the daily acts contributed to either the death or survival of an Acholi as shown below:

**Table 1:**  
*Living Archive Conceptualization*

Day-to-day acts	Question	Risked Living
Memory/Witness landscape	What happened? What do I remember?	Abductions, attempts to escape Crossing regional boundaries
Embodied	What did I Survive?	Starvation, miscarriage, public rejections, chronic illness
Performativity	How do I narrate my survival?	Autobiographies, storytelling, dances, archive
Ceremonies/ Cultural rituals	How have I mourned my inability to die?	LRA initiations for the abducted Reverence of the 10 biblical commandments
Public politics	How do I get included in the society post-war?	Amnesty declarations Truth telling Traditional justice mechanisms
Identities	What are my forms of speech?	I speak from where I am I am Acholi

Riaño-Alcala and Baine’s (2011), frame living archive as driven by the community of survivors to preserve the Acholi and their language of expression (performances, embodied and memory) from protracted insecurity. The reproduction of the living archive using the data of inscribed Acholi, who survived in social torture camps, falsely describe these to the world as protection villages (Dolan , 2009). On the other hand, children abducted by the LRA, returning to the communities as young adults, are rejected for the atrocities they committed. Both groups make it clear that the act of living was high risk; death was a more likely outcome. There is a lack of celebration from either side of ever surviving this war, there is bitter lament for surviving the war, yet they willingly risked death to be absolved from bottomless cruelty.

The six acts of safe witnessing while well established by Riaño-Alcala and Baine’s (2011) as life preserving, in our opinion, foment the disposability of an inscribed body or narrate tragic Acholi ends. We are of the view that to describe a living archive, from a subject not involved in dominant knowledge whose

human existence is diminished, this study reverberates as an expression of the inscribed body as an archive for re-affirming their selfhood. Actualizing selfhood by an inscribed body stands in opposition to dominant culture. The transformation of power, relationships with others, selves, and locations using responsive means (in this case archive, emancipatory pedagogy) contributes to a collective good and defines a new order that reflects becoming (Baines , 2017).

### Implications of the Study

The presence of African oral archives and their impact on this study, prove the burden of validating the “continent as having respectable precolonial history, and redeeming themselves from being perceived as undisciplined, rebellious and irresponsible child of documentary history” (Moss & Mazikana, 1986, p. 2). With every oral African tradition, there lies a specific kind of speech; which we establish briefly. The West African *griot*, 13<sup>th</sup> Century Malinke Empire (Senegal, Timbuktu, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire) (de Souza , 2016), is the teller of truth and the archive of mankind’s memory (Stennet, 2019). Sankofa archive among the Akan’s people in Ghana, calls for fetching the good in the past, or to fetch what you have forgotten, as not being taboo (Doaks, 2013). The archives of the South African, Credo Mutwa a high *Isanuse/*, a new age Shaman who created esthetic archives with authentic religious work by reformulating enduring motifs of human, mythical, alien and reptile forms, serve as a representation of African indigenous and religious authenticity (Chidester , 2002).

We offer the possibility of Wanjiku and the Acholi to be considered as additional descriptors, speaking to a dual body of victim and oppressor through the ‘quest for health’. The latter is explained by Tabensky, to be against violent oppression and the exploitation from exploration (2008, p.291). The confrontation of this gaze through the quest for health possibly provides direction towards re-configuring of the body to be clear and strong in the speech of political pain, guilt, human misery, and consequences of justice (Hart, 2000) as part of archive obligation to the society. This possibility expands ethical care of the archive (Derrida, 2002), where Wanjiku as a conceptualization becomes part of mainstream transformation discourse (Harris, 2002) whose life through the lens of quest of health impacts on *living archive as pedagogy*, as a preparation for an important journey of facing ‘death’, closure and the return to life to enlighten (Mbembe, 2002) our times.

### Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study separates itself from examining issues of governance, institutionalism, and civil society procedures. Consequently, the study is unable to respond to the pressing questions and politically sensitive issues of reconciliation, reparations, truth regimes, delayed implementation of transitional justice and de-politicization of opposition politics. This study is limited in the sense that it explores a particular intimate war (Maliti, 2017), and further conceptualizes Wanjiku, who exists within a given geographical and political context. The experiences of the Acholi and Wanjiku may resonate more with studies conducted within post-conflict in the Great Lakes Region. However, these different contexts and the reliance of interpretive hermeneutics limits wholesome generalizations of findings, to other contexts. Nevertheless, there are certain parallels or transferable ideas that can be borrowed from this study, as part of extending dialogue or new horizons that link pedagogy and archiving within the realm of post atrocity.

### Conclusions

Living archive as pedagogy is a specific study that asserts an unofficial curation of a post-conflict archive, where community- based organizations and survivor groups extract their own archive and use their authority as archivists, educators to willing hearers to decenter marginalization of lived war and post-war experiences. Living archive as pedagogy becomes part of the knowledge loop requiring that archives radically open up, by detaching and disrupting hierarchies of power, for newness in the locations from below.

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