Ageing with Smartphones in Uganda

*Togetherness in the Dotcom Age*

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Declaration: I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

In taking the lens of the smartphone to understand experiences of ageing in a diverse neighbourhood in central Kampala, Uganda, this ethnography presents the articulation and practice of ‘togetherness in the dotcom age’. Taking a situated and ‘convivial’ approach, which celebrates multiple and partial ways of knowing about sociality, the thesis draws from these vernacular concepts of cooperative morality and modernity to consider the everyday mitigation of wide-reaching social processes. Dotcom is understood to encompass everything from the influence of ICTs to urban migration and lifestyles in the city, to profound shifts in ways of knowing and relating. At the same time, dotcom tools such as mobile phones and smartphones facilitate elder care obligations despite distances, for example through regular mobile money remittances. Whilst phones are a global phenomenon, both the concept of dotcom and the way people creatively adapt and adopt their phones has to be understood in relation to specific contextual conditions. This thesis is concerned with how dotcom manifests in relation to older people’s health, their care norms, their social standing, their values of respect and relatedness, and their intergenerational relationships - both political and personal. It thus re-frames the youth-centricity of research on the city and work, new media and technology, politics and service provision in Uganda. Through ethnographic consideration of everyday life and self-formation in this context, the thesis seeks to contribute to an ever-incomplete understanding of ‘intersubjectivity’, how we relate to each other and to the world around us.
Impact Statement

This thesis follows interests of research participants in considering how people enact solidarity and generosity, despite economic pressures. This includes a grounded ethnographic analysis of relationships as they are upheld within the family, between neighbours, and across distances, as informed by the initial research interests of ageing, healthcare and mobile phones. Whilst the relational mitigation of economic factors is specific to the research context in Kampala, Uganda, the findings also speak to increasingly pertinent international concerns related to global population ageing. Throughout the thesis, ethnographic findings are employed alongside relevant critical decolonial, feminist and ‘convivial’ literature to imagine alternatives in which social possibilities are broadened, inequities addressed, and justice sought. For example, ideals around ageing are shown to be actively re-configured in everyday life in the city, locating possibilities both of continuity and mutability. This challenges the colonial imposition of fixity to custom to demonstrate how established ideals can have vitality and fluidity, with the potential for seeking social justice in contextually relevant ways. The thesis challenges stereotypes of the city as a place for youth and work, with discussions of older participants working routines and care responsibilities, and the impact this can have on their own health. This leads to policy recommendations regarding health provisions for older people who continue to work in later life, likely to become an increasingly pertinent public health issue around the world as the older population grows and as investment in social welfare declines. The thesis contributes to critical medical anthropology by highlighting the role of global socio-economic factors in intimate experiences of chronic non-communicable diseases amongst older people, exposing the narrow intersection between the individual and the political. This shows the processes through which economic inequities, gender roles, ageism and class can be reproduced through health and care responsibilities. Whilst being situated in the health context of Lusozì, these issues cut across worldwide uncertainties and therefore depicts an international concern. Dissemination of findings amongst decision-makers could support the improved provision of health and social protection for older people in Kampala.

The research has been part of the global study, the ‘Anthropology of Smartphones and Smart Ageing’, which has required an engaged commitment to global comparison, accessible research dissemination and education. In particular, research findings will be discussed and disseminated amongst policymakers, health workers, participants and students in Kampala, for example through succinct reporting, a readable and accessible monograph including photographs and
films, and face-to-face and online workshops. Furthermore, the project has included applied aims of contributing ethnographic insights to digital health initiatives, which has precipitated a research collaboration with a Ugandan digital health organisation. This research has supported successful grant-seeking efforts which has raised over $360,000 to evaluate a pilot project testing the acceptability and feasibility of a ‘Community Tele-psychotherapy Centre’ in Kampala, starting with the Lusozzi community.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Our Book

“Our book”; this is how Amor, my friend and colleague, refers to this thesis and the accessible version that will be published later as a monograph. It is something created collaboratively, alongside many other people in the community she grew up in, and our project team working around the world. This research is part of a global comparative study of ageing, health and smartphones called the ‘Anthropology of Smartphones & Smart Ageing’ (ASSA). As we introduced the project to our many older research participants, we would explain that its primary purpose is to educate others about their experiences of ageing, initially through an open-access monograph, which forms the basis of this thesis, as well as comparative books and articles, workshops, blog posts, collaborations with health workers and short films. When we introduced the project to Achola, a 60-year-old single grandmother, she said she had no questions because she felt ‘the book will help my grandchildren’, as she won’t always be here to teach them. We asked what she most hoped they would learn, and she said she wants them to ‘read it and know how to help each other’. Like many other people encountered during this research, she sees this as the main role of older people, to teach the younger generation how to work together; ‘even if you’re not from the same place, you stay together’.

This thesis outlines experiences present to the time of the research and the ways they are expressed by research participants. Often, this is framed by a shared ideal of ageing, which is contemporary, collaborative and in motion, adapted to the city and its diversity. In response to reading drafts of this book, some participants have written further contributions, and even described a few Acholi songs and dances. As one older man described it, song is “our book, our way of recording an event…instead of going to write down, you just sing about it, it remains in your head”. How much is lost in translation, or in the fixture of a song or story on a page? To British-trained social anthropologist and Acholi poet Okot p’Bitek, culture only exists as it is lived and celebrated in the here and now, so distinguishing the meanings attributed to social life and the world renders them meaningless (p’Bitek, 1986, p. 23). This is a process that has done much harm in Uganda and Africa more broadly, externally ‘defined and confined’ in the ‘single stories’ of harmful western narratives and scholarship (Mamdani, 2012, 1996; Nyamnjoh, 2012; p’Bitek, 1986). As shown in the influential work of Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani, the assumption of singular and fixed ethnicity and tradition has been employed politically and intellectually: the former as indirect colonial rule through ‘custom’, defining and shaping
difference; the latter embedded in European historiographies of Africa, in which ‘tradition’ has been used as a rhetorical device to establish a fixed starting point (2012; 1996). This has obscured the complexity of social processes, such as shared histories within diverse multi-ethnic urban communities like the one where this research took place.

As stated by Cameroonian anthropologist Francis Nyamnjoh, whose writing frames the analysis underpinning this book, “social truth is negotiable and requires humility” (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 65). In this vein, it is important to begin by emphasising that this thesis is an account co-produced through dialogue, which does not aspire to represent a singular social reality or objective position. Instead, the thesis seeks to align with the approaches of ‘convivial scholarship’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017) and feminist STS studies, by centring the ‘incompleteness’ or partiality and ‘radical multiplicity’ of social knowledge, disordering hierarchies and seeking situated possibilities of transformation (Haraway, 1988). The analysis is grounded in the observable patterns and anomalies in stories, idioms, concerns and aspirations, everyday work and routines, home and family lives, to build a contemporary picture of ageing in relation to the Kampala context, which is introduced later in this chapter. I hope it can contribute to an imaginative awareness of lived experiences as they fit into a wider shared context in the ‘dotcom era’, whilst demonstrating the potential of anthropology and its commitment to openness, flexibility, and friendship.

**Elders of the Dotcom Generation**

This study re-frames the youth-centricity of research on the city and work, new media and technology, politics and service provision in Uganda. It is based on a 16-month ethnography in neighbourhood in central Kampala, the capital city, here named ‘Lusozi Godown’. ‘Lusozi’ means ‘hill’ in Luganda, and ‘Godown’ is the latter name given to a few low-income areas in Kampala, which are often found at the bottom of its hills. The names can be used together and interchangeably. The neighbourhood is diverse, and people who live there originate from all over the country and regions beyond. Many people said they aspire to move back to their rural homes of origin as they grow older, once they no longer need to work in the city to pay for their children’s school fees. They maintain regular contact with their relatives at home through phone calls and mobile money remittances. About half of Lusozi’s residents - and participants in this research - are Acholi people from Northern Uganda, many of whom were displaced during the recent civil war in the region which ended in 2006. Given the significance of home in everyday experiences of ageing and aspirations for later life, this research is also informed by time spent in
participants’ home villages in rural northern Uganda, in Kitgum District, which will be introduced later in the chapter.

The ASSA project initially proposed an interest in experiences of ‘mid-life’, 40-75, neither young nor old and therefore often overlooked in research and service provision. In Uganda, this age group is a minority; the 2014 Ugandan National Household Survey found that 76% of the population are under the age of 30\textsuperscript{ii}, and that 3% of the population are over the age of 65\textsuperscript{ii}, compared with 21% in Europe and 13% worldwide\textsuperscript{iii}. However, with a 3.6% annual population growth\textsuperscript{iv}, in contrast with 0.6% globally\textsuperscript{v}, the actual numbers of older people are growing fast, posing an additional strain to support networks which are largely based on family. Family support systems for older people are already burdened by economic challenges and also by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, to which many of the older generation lost their adult children (de Klerk and Moyer, 2017; Golaz et al., 2017; Kuteesa et al., 2012; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Ssengonzi, 2007). Many people in the ‘middle generation’ therefore have care responsibilities for their parents, their children and grandchildren, and themselves. This means that whilst Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, age remains a significant demographic characteristic and socio-political concern; as shown in the subsequent chapter 2, older people are a growing and increasingly marginalised minority.

In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO), some researchers of ageing in Uganda and in East Africa more broadly set the boundary for ‘old’ at 50 and above (de Klerk and Moyer, 2017; Kuteesa et al., 2012; Velkoff and Kowal, 2007). However, this research in Kampala found that categories of age, ‘elderly’ and ‘middle aged’ for example, are in fact fluid and socially determined, rather than ‘natural’ (Honwana, 2012, p. 11). For example, people at 40 can be considered an elder, depending on their social position and experience. Amongst those concerned with ageing in Uganda, including researchers, NGOs, health workers and older participants themselves, ‘oldness’ is also defined by environment; harsh living due to work and poverty can make someone old, whilst maintaining health through good nutrition, exercise, physical work, a positive outlook and abstinence can keep someone young. Everyday working routines and ways of maintaining health are described in chapter 3.

Ideally, with age comes respect. Respect means being acknowledged and approached with humility by younger people in the family and community. Many participants in this research said they feel gratified when they are addressed as an elder, or when younger people seek their advice. Similarly, in a study amongst HIV patients over the age of 50 at a health centre in Kampala,
participants said they felt respected by health workers who called them ‘muzee’ or ‘elderly’ (Kuteesa et al., 2012: 302). Acholi society in particular is gerontocratic, with elders occupying positions of authority within their family, clan and community (Finnstrom, S., 2001; Whyte and Acio, 2017). However, the declining social value, isolation and loneliness of older people in Uganda is an increasing concern amongst various researchers of ageing in Uganda (Golaz et al., 2017; Nankwanga, A. Neema, S., 2020; Nzabona et al., 2016; Whyte, 2017; Wandera et al., 2017), as well as age NGOs, health workers and older participants themselves. These concerns are also reflected in various studies of ageing elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Aboderin, 2004; Maharaj, 2020; Maniragaba et al., 2019; Oppong, 2006; van der Geest, 1997), sometimes related to the widespread movement away from an agricultural to a cash economy, and from the villages to the urban centres (Van Der Geest, 2011: 71). In Lusozi, younger people are sometimes referred to as “the dotcom generation”, increasingly exposed to more individualistic social norms via education and new media. This “dotcom wave” represents wider social and political changes, and an erosion of long-standing social ideals based on respect for elders and ‘togetherness’. This discussion is expanded in the following chapter 2.

‘Togetherness’ has often been invoked as a social ideal throughout this research, with many older participants saying that it is their role to encourage people in their families and communities to ‘work together’. This is the explicit objective stated by the community groups described in chapter 4, to foster mutual support, belonging, friendship, and to help people manage the stresses of work and family responsibility. As shown in this chapter, particularly for Acholi participants, a concept of ‘working together’ may relate to a farming practice called ‘pur aleya’, or work parties called ‘awak’ (Girling, 2014, p. 89), in which people ‘pool their labour to work on each member’s farm in succession’, followed by a celebration (Otto et al., 2013, p. 169). This invokes a pragmatic idea of togetherness, a socially predetermined frame to encourage collaboration and alleviate burdens on an individual, which aligns with Nyamnjoh’s conceptualisation of “domesticated agency” and ‘interdependent independence’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261), and also with Tamale’s “social individuality” (Tamale, 2020, p. 204), in which individual interests are enabled by the collective. The ways togetherness is defined, discussed and enacted highlights how people forge continuities in social life, despite drastic shifts in the wider world (Jackson, 1998a; Whyte, 1997). This includes myriad processes of adaptation to urbanisation and displacement, health and economic crises, technological change and a rapidly growing population.
Susan Whyte, a medical anthropologist who has worked extensively in Uganda, has studied ‘pragmatic’ approaches to uncertainty related to money, health, family and relationships amongst the Nyole in Eastern Uganda (Whyte, 1997). Whilst based in a different Ugandan context and time period, with specific explanatory idioms and approaches to uncertainty, Whyte’s approach is useful in thinking through how people actively engage with the inevitable precarity and ambiguity of life through dialogue, idiom, stories, conversation and ‘social problem solving’ (Whyte, 1997, p. 18). Whyte’s study grounds situated practices which ‘produce and reproduce’ meaning within the indeterminate wider worlds of social relations and institutions; she argues that it is the task of ethnography to review the patterns (re)produced in the process (ibid). This anthropological approach to processual sociality and the significance of shared meanings builds from Jackson’s concept of ‘intersubjectivity’, the parallel and porous relationship in-between the personal and contextual, particular and universal (Jackson, 2002, 1998b), which is taken up by Finnström in his study of ‘meaning as lived’ in wartime Acholiland (2006: 78). This idea of ‘lived meaning’, “blurring boundaries between everyday life and politics” (Finnström, 2008, p. 82, cf Jackson, 2002), remains relevant to this study within the ‘ever-evolving’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017) context of Lusozi, where Acholi histories are retold and ‘home’ reconfigured (Appadurai, 1991: 191; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, p. 3; Sigona et al., 2015, p. xix).

Stories of “the past in the present” (Allen, 1988, p. 48; Jackson, 1998: 2) have historically been employed as a methodology for understanding Luo and Acholi origins (Atkinson, 1994; Crazzolara, 1950; Ogot, 1967; Onyango-Ku-Odongo and Webster, 1976), which has been critiqued as speculative and ‘futile’ (Allen, 2019, 1991a; Campbell, 2006; p’Bitek, 1971), for recursively informing identities and oral histories themselves, for obscuring the instability of the past, and for failing to recognise that “oral traditions are concerned…with the foundation and maintenance of existing institutions” (p’Bitek, 1970, p. 3). With these relevant critiques in mind, ‘stories of the past’ offer insight into the ways people characterise and experience the present (Allen, 2019, p. 14), and how this informs and reflects values as they are invoked and practiced day to day (Finnström, 2006: 80). Jackson depicts how such storytelling implicates the relational processes of seeking what Giddens has termed ‘ontological security’, which is defined as a sense of continuity and control over the shifting objective domain (Jackson, 1998: 71, ref Giddens, 1990). Storytelling as a ‘quest for ontological security’ (Finnström, 2006: 80) might include ritual, or, of particular relevance to the thesis, practical forms of coexistence or ‘togetherness’, which also offer meaning and a “degree of control over the forces of destiny” (Jackson, 1998: 71). As Finnström argues in his ethnography of life in the Acholi sub-region during the civil war, there is...
an ‘anthropological duty to understand meaning as lived’ (Finnström, 2006: 80), and to consider how it (re)produces social relations, institutions and politics.

Arguably, intersubjective processes for seeking ‘ontological security’ are particularly apparent in consideration of ageing and care, and how family expectations for elder care are re-configured across distances and generations. This the focus of chapter 6, which seeks to illustrate alignment between the everyday discussion and practices of care with wider global processes, particularly as those connections are illuminated by participants themselves, including health workers, hospital administrators, older people and their relatives. Health problems like hypertension or ‘pressure’ can be conceptualised as a manifestation of ‘pressures’ imposed by economic ‘problems’ and the resulting care burdens, their management an embodied mitigation of the political economy. In terms of care practices, norms are re-defined against a “social imagination” of institutionalised elder care in other contexts (Coe, C., 2020). This analysis thereby contributes to the existing literature in critical medical anthropology on ageing and care which seeks to radically contextualise intimate and everyday care practices (Buch, 2015; Fassin, 2009; Kehr, J., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017; Kleinman, 2015). As Nguyen et al put it in their study of ‘care arrangements in the political economy of globalization’, the “[c]oexistence of local and global ideas about aging and care on which young and elderly people draw to survive and maintain relationships in shifting political economic conditions” causes a ‘moral anxiety’, a contemporary experience shared across contexts (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 206). Conflicting moral frameworks such as those of neoliberal market logics (Ferguson, 2006; Muehlebach, 2013), as well as human rights discourses (Mutua, 2017; Tamale, 2020) and Pentecostalism (Robbins, 2004), thus expose reflections on the everyday relational mitigation of global processes (Robbins, 2007; Zigon, 2007); this is drawn out in chapter 7 on cooperative morality.

Elder care in particular invokes the ambiguity of moral contradictions, of self-responsibility both promoted and undermined, of increasing frailty and financial precarity in later life, and of transfigured ‘constellations of care’ (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 199) across distances. Here, the mobile phone and smartphone in this study further sharpens the lens of intersubjectivity in elder care onto social trajectories. This research found that ‘dotcom’ technologies, including mobile money and social media, offer a platform for up-holding family relationships and expectations. Despite stereotypes, older people actively partake in the use of these technologies, appropriating them for their needs, values, relationships and preferences, as detailed in chapter 5. If knowledge of phones is thought to belong to the younger dotcom generation, with the potential to undermine reverence for older people’s knowledge, young people sharing ‘dotcom’ knowledge
and connections with them can also show respect (Porter et al., 2015). And just as many older people suggested that they feel respected and cared for by their (grand)children, the majority said they continue to care and respect for their own elders - even ‘at a distance’ (Ahlin, 2018; Pols, 2012). Mobile money remittances for older relatives’ health needs express care and maintain kinship ties (Kusimba et al., 2016; Maurer, 2012), exemplifying the moral embeddedness both of money (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989; Zelizer, 2018) and of phone use. This therefore contributes to anthropological literature on the “social shaping of the mobile phone” (Bruijn, 2013, p. 3), the ways that they are embedded within existing relationships, networks and sociocultural preferences (Archambault, 2017; Bruijn, 2013; de Bruijn et al., 2009; Horst and Miller, 2006; Vokes, 2018).

The appropriation of ‘dotcom’ for care across distances can be understood in relation to Cati Coe’s concept of ‘family repertoires’, which is based on her anthropological research about aging in Ghana. Where families are increasingly “scattered” around the world (Coe, 2014; Sigona et al., 2015), existing family expectations or ‘repertoires’, “ways of speaking, thinking, and feeling about the family – that mobilize material resources and people in ways that are considered normal and natural” (Coe, 2014, p. 5), are shifting. ‘Family repertoires’ draw from a history of kinship practices, such as family roles, care norms and intergenerational reciprocities, which have long been established and adapted to economic change and migration (ibid, p.41). With a limited ethnographic timeframe of 16 months, historical family repertoires are in part accessible through ‘stories of the past’ invoked by various research participants, such as those about home-based intergenerational care, ideally in rural areas, with older people surrounded by an extended family network who take up different care roles based on their gender and position. Earlier ethnographies also shed light on family repertoires as they are invoked, enacted and adapted; in particular, Parkin’s 1969 ethnography in a housing estate near Lusozi demonstrated how Luo people from Western Kenya and Northern Uganda draw on kinship networks and ‘ideologies’ in Kampala, particularly given shared economic interests based on bridewealth, patrilineal inheritance and customary land tenure (Parkin, 1969, p. 133). Of course, Parkin also notes the fluidity with which kin ties and customs are employed, and their adaptation to ‘new and specifically urban patterns’, not least the ethnic diversity of the city and the political uncertainty of the post-Independence period (ibid, p.191). Through these processes of social change in a migration context, there are patterned but not yet discursively normative ways that people uphold intergenerational expectations such as care obligations which form what Coe and Alber term ‘age inscriptions’ (Coe and Alber, 2018), a useful terminology and perspective for thinking through the re-configuration of elder care norms amongst participants in Lusozi. This builds on
Bourdieu’s theories of ‘habitus’ and ‘social reproduction’ (1977), whereby existing power structures are inhabited and reproduced through embodied practices. Coe’s ‘age inscriptions’ offers a more applicable, processual conception of social trajectories, which allows for the possibility of indeterminacy and change over time. Care practices for older relatives such as mobile money remittances, daily support from neighbours, hired domestic workers and grandchildren sent home to live with grandparents in rural areas, may not represent a discursive ideal of ageing at home surrounded by extended family, but are widespread ways of managing contextual uncertainty whilst fitting within the existing ‘repertoire’. In turn, these “experimental but habituated” (Coe and Alber, 2018, p. 2) practices can reproduce existing social hierarchies related to geography, class and gender (Coe, C., 2020).

Overall, this thesis considers the ways that everyday cooperative moralities are discussed and practiced with reference to the broader socio-political context. This is specific to the urban neighbourhood of Lusozi, a place of population density and diversity which, as Nyamnjoh puts it, “reflect[s] the reality of cities and places and spaces of incompleteness, requiring trust, interdependence, solidarity and mutual support to get by” (Nyamnjoh, 2017). There, people ‘dynamically adapt to the challenging contemporary context of western inspired modernity’; interdependencies are not just ‘pushed aside’ but are ‘continually promoted through conviviality amidst diverse worldviews’ (ibid, p.261-262). In the following sections, I outline a picture of the research setting in Kampala and the historical complexity of a city which remains “mixed in every sense” (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 28). Nyamnjoh’s concept of conviviality and its relevance in Lusozi is then further outlined, along with the implications this has had for my own research ethics, methodology and analysis in this setting.

**Lusozi: “The United States of Kampala”**

Kampala sits on 7 hills. As with the rest of the capital city, Lusozi hill has starkly contrasting socioeconomic areas; wealthier gated housing is often found at the top of the hills, with the poorer housing areas known as slums at the bottom. According to national figures, Lusozi hill from top to bottom has a total population of 31,691 people, exactly 50/50 male and female, with 25% of households headed by a woman. Lusozi Godown is estimated in government figures to have 2080 households of 10,400 people, with an average of five people per household. But the local leadership who participated in this research estimated the population to be more than 15,000, and the initial household survey of 50 respondents in this research found an average of seven people per household. Household composition is diverse, including for example multi-
generational families, polygynous and monogamous marriages, female headed households, older people living alone, young men living and working together, co-habiting couples or siblings, single grandmothers and their grandchildren. This likely explains why my own household survey shows more average residents in Lusozi than the national statistics due to the ways that households are narrowly defined in demographic data (Randall and Coast, 2015).

Morning and evening, Lusozi Godown is busy with activity. As well as the central market with about 20 stalls, households often have small shops outside their front door, selling essential food like tomatoes, eggs, groundnuts, onions, sugar, maize flour or posho and cooking oil. Others are mobile vendors, selling mobile money, airtime and repair services. At 5am, many of the market vendors go to the district market nearby, buying in bulk and reselling their wares for a small profit. The boda boda (motorbike taxi) drivers start taking their deliveries for hotels and restaurants, taking people to work and school. Further down the hill, people navigate their way to work through the narrow corridors, sometimes greeting neighbours as they pass. Men push bicycles laden with deliveries, sacks of flour, matooke (savoury banana). Women make samosas, frying them to sell to the kids on their way to school. Trucks piled with charcoal arrive, offloaded for the various vendors to sort and sell. Men carry them quickly over the shoulder, heads bent. Young girls fetch and carry 20 litre jerry cans of water, lining them up at home for drinking, showering and washing. Swift hands wash clothes and hang them out to dry, peel cassava, mingle posho over burning charcoal, or take tea. Young children playing. Women walk slowly carrying heavy loads on their head, baskets of mangoes for selling in town, wood for burning. Barrows full of fresh fruit, peeled and quartered, are wheeled in to sell, watermelon, pineapple, jackfruit, mango. G-nuts are ground into paste. People pass dressed for prayers. Young men congregate to play games, big boards or smartphone screens for ludo… An older man in a high-vis jacket known as Salongo (father of twins) often patrols the area, demanding the residents clean up their rubbish for collection day. Boda drivers relax together, lining up their bikes at their stage, waiting for their next customer. Hawkers carry clothes, kitenge (fabric), woven matts for sale, occasionally being stopped to negotiate. Music of various genres, especially gospel, afrobeat, reggae, traditional music from across Uganda, Lingala and rumba, plays from big sound systems outside shops selling flash disks of music. Some people start drinking early, ‘loading yaka (electricity)’, ordering their beers, sachets or home brew waragi (gin) in the gathering places and bars. At around 1pm, the kids come home for their lunch. By then, the chapatis are rolled out for frying with eggs, ‘rollex’. Market vendors take it in turns to come home for a break in the afternoon, to wash and rest for an hour before going back to their stalls. In the evening, maize, goat’s meat and offal are barbecued. Rush hour traffic brings people home. Babies sitting in
basins cry as the soap is rubbed out of their eyes. People come back for dinner whilst uniformed security guards are picked up for their night shift. The headlights of the boda bodas turn on, as their journeys continue into the night.

Ethnographies of Kampala social life have long identified the “extreme heterogeneity” of the city, as well as the historic tendency to diversity, mobility, compromise and openness in Uganda (Southall and Gutkind, 1957; Fallers, 1960; Nahemow, 1979; Parkin, 1969; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996). Lusozi Godown is representative of this diverse social context in terms of language, religion and ethnicity, as outlined respectively here. English is the official language in Uganda and is particularly widely spoken in Kampala. However, not all participants are fluent in English, and mother tongues are diverse in the Lusozi Godown area. Languages spoken include: Luganda, which is the language of the Baganda people from the central ‘Buganda’ region, the largest and historically most dominant ethnic group in Uganda; Luo, the language spoken by the Alur and Acholi people in Northern Uganda; and others in

Figure 1.1a & 1.1b.
Photos taken in Lusozi by Charlotte Hawkins.
neighbouring Kenya and Sudan; Kiswahili, a Bantu language spoken widely throughout East Africa, and in Lusozi particularly amongst police officers who have travelled across the region; Nubian, a Sudanese and latterly Arabic language spoken by Nubian people, who are often the longest-standing residents in Lusozi Godown. Some of the most elderly participants in this research are Nubian and regard Lusozi as their village, the place they will grow old in.

Approximately 40% of interviews were translated by Amor, who grew up in the area and therefore speaks all these languages fluently. Quotations from these translated interviews are cited with ‘these inverted commas’ rather than “these speech marks” to differentiate them throughout the thesis.

At the time of the research in Lusozi, there was one mosque, one Catholic church, one Anglican church and seven Pentecostal churches, including the first Full Gospel Church established in Kampala. Religion here is ‘an integral part of culture’, regarded as a source of strength and comfort, acceptance of fate in ill health and adversity as ‘God’s Will’ (MacNeil, 1996, p. 16). In the 2014 census only 0.2% of the population claimed to have no religion. 14% of the population in Uganda are Muslim and 84% Christian. Of the latter, 11% are Pentecostal, contrasting with just 5% in 2002, reflecting the rapid growth of Pentecostalism. Undoubtedly the proportion will have shifted since 2014, with many interviewees saying they have been ‘saved’ within the last 5 years. According to the census, only 1% of the population follow traditional religions; this relates to earlier history outlined below, when Arab traders converted people to Islam, and when British colonisers later arrived with Christian missionaries, who labelled existing spiritual belief systems as satanic (Okello, 2007, p. 15). Although statistics on religion in the region need to be taken with caution, as recognised by theologian John Mbiti, ‘many millions of Africans are followers of more than one religion, even if they may register or be counted in census as adherents of only one’ (Ukah, 2018). Various participants would acknowledge that Christians and Muslims share faith in one God, and some said they like to pray in both the Church and the mosque. A few people said they identify with more than one Christian denomination, for example attending services in both established and Born-Again Churches.
Colonisation in East Africa began in 1894, after the arrival of Arab traders in the 17th century, the European explorers during the late 18th century, and the devastation of the 19th century slave trade (Allen, 1988, p. 49). British imperial efforts were initially focused in the central region of Uganda, particularly amongst the populous and hierarchically centralised Baganda people (Fallers, 1960, p. 16). Those of the Buganda political elite gained prosperity from conversion to Christianity and collaboration with the British (Mugambwa, J., 1989) which in turn destabilized royal succession, prompted religious civil wars and made way for British colonization (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 600). Kampala became “the centre of political, commercial and religious life” in the country (Fallers, 1960, p. 23). Between 1894 and 1919, legislative, economic, educational, medical and governmental services were formed, and the diverse country was divided into a national system of districts, counties and villages (Achol, I., 1987, p. 150). Borders were drawn, imposing fixity on previously fluid boundaries and identities (Finnström, 2008, p. 53); Uganda was industrialised and raw materials extracted with forced labour (ibid, p. 89); market requirements moved people from rural to urban areas, enforcing a ‘fragmentation’ between the two (Mamdani, M., 1996, p. xiv); the English language was imposed, and histories re-written in texts to suit the hegemonic colonial narrative (Finnström, 2008, p. 89); customs were ‘instrumentalised’ to cement power, and ‘annulled’ as civil authorities saw morally fit (Mamdani, M., 1996, p. xiii); privileges and oppressions were distributed based on binary European notions of race, gender and sexuality (Tamale, 2020, p. 2); and spirituality and education were ‘monopolised’ by Christian missionaries (Finnström, 2008, p. 53). The legacies of imperial violence and racism remain resilient up to today (Finnström, 2008, p. 95; Mamdani, 1996; Nakirya and State, 2013, p. 35; Nyamnjoh, 2012).
Southall and Gutkind’s ‘general survey’ of Kampala in 1957 outlined growing political tensions between the Protectorate and Buganda governments (Southall and Gutkind, 1957, p. 6). They identify in particular the dominant wealth of the British and Asian settler municipalities, which had rapidly grown in size and influence over the prior century (Southall and Gutkind, 1957, p. 6). Independence was gained in 1962, which was followed by years of political and economic insecurity (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 598). Milton Obote, who originated from Northern Uganda, was first elected, alongside a ceremonial presidency of the Kabaka (King) Mutesa II of Buganda (Achol, I., 1987, p. 150). Obote later overthrew this Presidency with the support of the army under Idi Amin (Ibid), who himself led a military coup to seize power in 1971. Amin’s rule ended in 1979 after the Uganda-Tanzania war. This led to the return of Obote, again deposed by General Tito Okello, who six months later was ousted by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) under Yoweri Museveni. Museveni remains in power after amending the presidential age threshold and the two-term limit to now serve his sixth, despite mounting opposition. During Amin’s rule, it is estimated that 300,000 of his political opponents were killed, and many Asian people and business-owning elites were expelled from the country (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 3). This contributed to ‘economic stagnation’ in the 1970s and 80s and severe cuts in social services such as healthcare (ibid, p. 7). The subsequent conditions of international trade policy, development and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund continue to suffocate industry and public spending (ibid). Uganda is now categorised as a low-income country by the World Bank\textsuperscript{xiii}, and whilst poverty rates in Uganda have decreased from 57% in 1993 to 20% in 2013, inequality is rising and “poverty is still widespread”\textsuperscript{xiv}. The National Labour Force Survey (NLFS) 2016/17\textsuperscript{xv} found that 41% of the working population work in subsistence agriculture, but of those who don’t, 85% work in what is known as the ‘informal sector’ (Ferguson, 2006; Hart, 1985; Wallman and Baker, 1996), which generates over half of national GDP. This contributes to Uganda being ranked the third highest nation in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in 2014, with 28% of adults owning their own businesses\textsuperscript{xvi}, including many of the older people who participated in this research. Their everyday working routines and the implications of this for their health are described in chapter 3.

People who live in Lusozi come from all over the country, and the region beyond. Local leadership and residents often call Lusozi Godown ‘the United States of Kampala’, demonstrating the celebrated multiplicity of residents’ ethnic, geographic, linguistic and cultural origins, known as ‘tribes’, of which there are said to be 39 in Uganda. (The word ‘tribe’ is referenced here only as an ‘emic’ term, in the way it’s used meaningfully by participants. In etic
terms, the use of the word ‘tribe’ has been problematised by various theorists, including Mamdani, who critiques the colonial imposition of fixed, one-dimensional definitions of people and customs in Africa – instrumentalising and segregating cultures, rather than allowing their organic development and assimilation (1996, xiii). Nyamnjoh (2012, 68) has also stressed that scholar’s acceptance of colonially imposed labels is problematic and under-plays the multiethnicity of societies.)

As mentioned above, of particular historical relevance to this ethnography is Parkin’s 1969 study of ‘social processes’ in two housing estates with proximity to Lusozi, which at the time were the residence of people employed in industry. Similar themes in this ethnography with mostly Luo-speaking people in the same area of Kampala at an earlier – and seemingly more affluent – time in the area, includes the multi-ethnicity of the neighbourhood relationships as well as the formation of associations based on solidarity as a response to socio-economic and political uncertainty (1969, p.ix). The estates were since declared dilapidated and have been under development for over 20 years; a few of those evicted live in Lusozi Godown today, and they suspect this development may have contributed to the crowdedness of the area. Parkin worked primarily with Luo people who had migrated from Kenya, who he predicted were likely to return during post-Independence uncertainty, their position “filled by an increasing number of people from the Northern and Eastern provinces of Uganda, especially Acholi, Alur, Lango, Teso and Lugbara” (Parkin, 1969: 11). Roughly half of the people living in Lusozi today originate from northern Uganda. They either migrated to seek employment in the city or were more recently displaced during the terrible violence of the 20-year civil war, which ended in 2006. This includes Amor, whose parents fled to Kampala soon after she was born. Northern Ugandan, specifically Acholi culture, has therefore been particularly influential in my research. Whilst some Acholi people like Amor have been raised in Lusozi, with the conveniences of the city, it is still not considered a “real home” and instead is seen as a place of work. As an Acholi elder explains in chapter 3, a “real home” is a place where you have ‘extended family and cultural practices around you’, unlike in Godown which ‘can never be seen as home’. From the perspective of the city, ‘home’ is therefore significant to participant’s everyday lives and aspirations, their experiences of ageing. They often discussed plans to move back home as soon as possible, once school fees have been paid, money saved, and house and land have been prepared. And many people encountered in Lusozi maintain regular phone contact with relatives living at home, sending them remittances via mobile money. We therefore spent a month in Kitgum, Northern Uganda, during the course of the research, staying in Amor’s Jaja’s (grandmothers) home. Insights from
these visits also inform the thesis, particularly based on conversations with Amor’s family elders. Relevant information about the Acholi sub-region is summarised in the following section.

The Acholi Sub-region

Based on the Ugandan administrative structure, the Acholi Sub-region, also known as Acholiland, is comprised of seven districts: Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya and Pader (see map below). In the 2015 census, 1.5 million Acholi people were counted, meaning they form 4.4% of the Ugandan population. Amor’s family home is in Palabek, Kitgum, “deep in the village”, a 12-hour journey from Kampala, by bus, car and boda boda (motorbike taxi). It is close to the border with South Sudan and nearby a refugee camp for South Sudanese people who have fled into Uganda. Amor’s father’s family have lived there for 10 generations, over 300 years. The village has 84 households, each with at least 5 residents and many children, so they estimate that there are over 400 people who live there. Kitgum District has a population of 204,048, with 10% aged 40-59 and 5% over 60\(^\text{xvii}\), and farming is the main source of livelihood for 80%\(^\text{xviii}\) of the 39,697 households\(^\text{xix}\). Crops include millet, sesame (‘sim sim’), groundnuts, peas, sorghum and vegetables, and many people keep livestock, including chickens, pigs, goats, and cows. Most houses are of the traditional style in Northern Uganda, a circular structure with one room made with bricks of dried earth and a grass thatched roof with a high peak. The grass thatched roofs are often neatly arranged in groups of five or more, surrounded by the family’s trees and land. In each family homestead, there are few separate structures; typically, one for married couples, one for unmarried girls, one for unmarried boys, and one for cooking. Several such hamlets, with a population of around 150 people, make up one village.

Figure 1.3. Map of Uganda, ‘Districts of Uganda as of 1st July 2016’, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), Kitgum District, p.8\(^\text{xix}\).
During Uganda’s colonial period, fixed geographical boundaries were delineated between regions. As Okot p’Bitek puts it, “[t]he term Acholi which originally referred to a linguistic group later became a geographical term when the colonial administration divided up the territory of Uganda into districts” (p’Bitek, 1971). Crops and industries were also distributed geographically, and whilst cash crops and legislative roles were introduced in the south, people in the North were generally employed for staple crop farming, manual work and the military (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 7). This has had a lasting effect in terms of regional socioeconomic inequities, and it is often remarked that the northern region is the poorest in the country, with the most limited access to technology, healthcare and education.

With the view that ethnic and linguistic groups were codified to colonial ends (Mamdani, 2012), the origins of the Acholi identity are contested. The work of Tim Allen, an anthropologist who has conducted extensive research in the Acholi sub-region, depicts how colonial encounters have framed reified notions of Acholi-ness and Acholi history in complex ways (Allen, 2019, 1991a). As well as Acholi qualities ‘emerging out of dialogue’ with colonial administrators and missionaries, as highlighted in the earlier work of British anthropologist Frank Girling (Girling, 1960, p. 200) and p’Bitek (1970), Allen shows how English-language scholarship has also recursively informed oral histories (Allen, 1991a, p. 90). Various oral historical works of the Luo-speaking people in Uganda, especially the Acholi (e.g. Atkinson, 1994; Crazzolara, 1950; Ogot, 1967; Onyango-Ku-Odongo and Webster, 1976) have been critiqued as speculative and futile (Allen, 1991, p. 88; Campbell, 2006, p. 76; p’Bitek, 1970, p. 3), for failing to recognise that, as p’Bitek puts it, “oral traditions are concerned not so much with the ultimate and historical origins, but with the foundation and maintenance of existing institutions” (p’Bitek, 1970, p. 3), and, “[l]egends whose proper function was to make the world intelligible have been read for history, the events related taken as if they actually took place” (ibid, p. 11). These stories often rely not only on the narrow views of elite men such as clan elders, but also on an assumed boundedness of clans, generations and the Luo as a whole (Campbell, 2006, p. 81), according oral testimonies as ‘facts’ rather than ‘situated knowledge reflecting contemporary processes’ (ibid, p.82). Overall, Allen argues that this work has obscured the instability of the past, such as chaos in the region during the slave trade era, and that this has contributed to the characterisation of pre-colonial and colonial times as “a lost era of tranquillity”, with a tendency to “claims about how social life today should be enhanced with reference to cultural heritage and customary forms of dispute resolution” (Allen, 2019: 17). He shows how reified notions of Acholi-ness and Acholi history have been particularly harmful during recent attempts by international agencies to enact traditional forms of conflict resolution after the war (Allen, 2007),
as will be discussed further in chapter 2. For this thesis, it has been important to take account of this convincing assessment of earlier scholarship on Acholi history and custom whilst retaining ethnographic prioritisation of the perspective of research participants, many of whom express a “passionate interest in their traditions” (Allen, 2019, p. 71). This has informed an understanding of ‘stories of the past’ encountered ethnographically as insight into making sense of the present, as p’Bitek puts it ‘making the world intelligible’ (1970, p.11), defining shared values which are also meaningfully enacted. As Finnström found in his 2008 ethnography of wartime Acholiland, Acholi tradition and identity is “lived and mutable” (Finnström, 2008, p. 32), as this ethnography also makes explicit.

The recent 20-year civil war in northern Uganda is considered to be ‘rooted’ in the inequities fostered during the colonial period, with the political marginalisation of Acholi people attributed to the rise of Joseph Kony’s ‘Lord’s Resistance Army’ (LRA) and their rebellion against Museveni’s oppression of the North (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 7). In 1987, Kony and his rebels began recruiting young men to their army by force (Meier, B, 2013, p. 39). An estimated 30,000 children were abducted and forced to work as child-soldiers. During the years that followed, as research participants tell it, the rebel and government troops travelled through the region, looking for their opponents and food to sustain their armies, leaving devastation in their wake. Meanwhile, people would sleep in the bush, hiding out of harm’s way, and only returning to their homes to cook and eat. After failed peace talks in 1994, the arbitrary violence of Kony’s army intensified, with massacres, rape, mutilation, and abduction. Some people managed to dodge roadblocks and escape to find relatives in Kampala, as is the story of many of the Acholi people encountered in Lusozi. There, they could face violence and discrimination. Those left behind were eventually detained in camps or ‘protected villages’ for Internally Displaced People (IDP), where people continued to be regularly attacked. Being displaced from their land, people were reliant on food aid from the World Food Programme, and the camps are now known for conditions of overcrowding, disease and malnutrition, with the World Health Organization (WHO) estimating that 1,000 excess lives were lost each week from January to July 2005. From 2006 onwards, people were permitted to return to their homes via ‘satellite camps’, but according to many people today, peace remains fragile, often due to land conflicts in the region. The violence of the war and the duration of insecurity in the IDP camps has disrupted social institutions, and the social legacies of war have been studied extensively by anthropologists (e.g. Akello, 2019; Allen, 2007, p. 200; Finnström, 2015, 2008; Porter, 2019; Whyte et al., 2016; Whyte and Acio, 2017). As Holly Porter put it in her shattering paper on the impact of war on the Acholi ‘moral landscape’ and the regulation of social harmony, “[m]any...
mourn the profound ways that war is seen to have unsettled the moral foundations of Acholi ways of life”, with the legacies of economic devastation, land grabbing, alcoholism, domestic and sexual violence (Porter, 2019, p. 1013). Whyte and Meinert noted the same outcomes resulting from the “contamination of violence” (Meinert and Whyte, 2017), including structural and domestic violence, and the land conflicts pervading the region today, which are discussed in the following section.

This Land is Not for Sale

As much as 90% of land in Uganda is owned through customary tenure (Hopwood, 2015, p. 388). Customary land is a significant aspect of elder authority and social value (Nzabona and Ntozi, 2017; Whyte and Acio, 2017), with older men in particular allocating land access amongst the family and called upon to determine land boundaries (Nzabona and Ntozi, 2017: 3694). In the Acholi sub-region, land is typically inherited patrilineally, fathers to sons, or maritally, husbands to wives. Land is said to be the most valuable thing in Acholi culture, representing home and wealth for former, current and future generations, as “the only thing which does not depreciate”. Where historically land could be gifted by the clan to outsiders such as in-laws and friends, with increasing shortages of land, these ‘guests’ and their successors’ claims to land may now be contested (Hopwood, 2015, p. 392). Customary tenure has also been disrupted by long-term displacement during the LRA war and the death of many clan elders with knowledge of land boundaries, as well as increasing national regulations, population growth and large-scale investments or ‘land grabbing’. This has resulted in confusion around land claims and disputes are common, often on generational or gendered bases (Whyte and Acio, 2017). For example, younger people are expected to wait patiently for allocated land, respectfully deferring to their elder’s knowledge; it is common to hear disparaging stories of younger men selling family land to buy a boda boda and move to town (ibid, p. 33). The sale of customary land is generally prohibited, with the moralised implications of pursuing short-term self-interest over long-term collective gain (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989). Women’s claims to land are particularly challenged, given increasing marital instability and difficulties in paying bride-wealth (Allen, 2007, 1988; Whyte and Acio, 2017); some families, like Amor’s, may make provision for this and share the land equally between sons and daughters. The is also evident in Hopwood’s study of women’s land claims in the Acholi region, which noted a tendency for elders and communities to provide land for women who were unmarried or divorced (Hopwood, 2015, p. 403). However, some women we met in Lusozi had been chased from their land by their brothers, in-laws or co-wives, themselves and their future sons considered a threat to shared resources.
Land ownership is considered a determinant of older people’s social value; ideally, older people have experience and land, deciding when it is inherited by younger people, ensuring they are respected and cared for by them. For Acholi people, it is also necessary to be buried at home; traditionally, men in the land of their father’s clan, and for formally married women (whose husbands have paid bridewealth) in their husband’s family land, connecting the land across former and future generations\textsuperscript{xxv}. Gendered and generational ideals related to land inheritance and bridewealth payments, and therefore patrilineal and patrilocal access to ‘home’, have also been disrupted by displacement and economic difficulties (Whyte and Acio, 2017, p. 20). Bridewealth has become increasingly unaffordable, with families often arranging for ‘gradual instalments’ instead, leaving couples “in a state of marital limbo” (Hopwood, 2015, p. 402). The resulting marital instability is thought to leave women in a particularly tenuous position (Allen, 2007; Porter, 2019; Whyte and Acio, 2017), with many left as the sole carers of their children (Hopwood, 2015, p. 402), as encountered in Lusozi. Some of the older women who participated in this research explained that they now live in Lusozi because they were forced to leave their husband’s land by in-laws or co-wives; instead, in line with Ugandan anthropologist Christine Obbo’s earlier 1980 study with African women and ‘their struggle for economic independence’ in two low-income Kampala suburbs, they have employed ‘mobility’ and ‘hard work’ to attain financial autonomy (Obbo, 1980, p. 4) and provide for their children.

Figure 1.4: A research participant’s family elders showing land boundaries to the younger men following a dispute with the neighbours. Kitgum, Uganda.
From the perspective of the capital city, land insecurity also represents a significant threat to older people’s everyday lives and aspirations. Many participants regularly returned home to protect their land boundaries, as is often expected of older family members (Nzabona and Ntozi, 2017: 3694). Some, such as Kevin, had husbands or wives who remain in the village to protect their land; “when we all stay here [in Kampala], people are very funny, you will just get information that ahhh they have taken your land. You have to look after that land”. Land ownership and tenancy within Lusozi is also uncertain. In an initial household survey conducted in Lusozi, 50 participants had lived in the neighbourhood for an average of 22 years, some for less than a year, some for their whole lifetime. For some people, like Joe, whose family had lived there for three generations, “it is my village”. Joe’s grandfather, like many older participants in Kampala, would have lived through the latter years of British protectorate rule, as well as the subsequent civil wars. He grew up in the house that his grandfather built “when Lusozi was all bush”. Below (figure 1.5) is Joe’s house where he’s lived since 2007, a small room with two beds that he shares with his wife and 6 daughters aged between 3 and 13. This shows the expensive housing looming alongside, its luxurious foliage spilling over the wall. This is indicative of a burgeoning housing crisis in Kampala, particularly in central locations like this. The government are in the process of demolishing many of the slum areas and replacing them with housing too expensive for its previous residents. Lusozi Godown is no exception, and as in figure 5.6 below, you can see piles of bricks which only recently were homes.

![Figure 1.5: Photos of housing in Lusozi taken by Charlotte Hawkins.](image-url)
With the development of buildings in the area, many fear impending displacement, as in the outskirts where houses are already being demolished with little warning in place of high-rise blocks of flats. A few houses in these areas have defiantly painted ‘Not For Sale’ on the walls, a sign that is also visible throughout the city and beyond. “Where will we go? In three years’ time you won’t find us here. Now that construction has started, who will accept to see these kinds of houses here.” We often heard the expression, “Godown any time”, as in, at any time the land could be sold at the will of more powerful and wealthy people. This is a key concern of local politicians, including the District Mayor, whose speeches in the neighbourhood promise the community that he is taking care of the land, protecting the many titles from ‘land grabbers’.

Having lived in Lusozì Godown for many years, Achola has seen how things have changed in Kampala. ‘In those days it wasn’t this way, there’s a lot of development’. By ‘development’, she means that there are more buildings, and more people studying in schools and travelling overseas. The word ‘development’ is often used by participants to refer to these diverse semantics of social change, perhaps informed by media, government, and NGO discourses prominent in Kampala. This is discussed in the following section on development and education.
Development and Education

Okot p’Bitek argued that “[v]ague terms such as Tribe, Folk, Non-literate or even innocent-looking ones such as Developing, etc, must be subjected to critical analysis and thrown out or redefined to suit African interests” (p’Bitek, 1970, p. 7), given the assumptions implicit in the terms that ‘Africa lags behind Europe on an evolutionary scale’ (Imbo, 2002: 4). These assumptions inform various anthropological critiques of the development industry, such as: international aid and development initiatives can undermine government accountability (Pype, K., 2017: 162); development interventions therefore fit the neoliberal narrative of poverty, de-responsibilising the state from social welfare and protection, and further exposing poor people to the “vicissitudes of market” (Ferguson, 2015); initiatives manage and problematise the symptoms of poverty or other structural problems, rather than the cause (Mercer, 2006: 243); there is often an over-reliance on narrow quantitative research in development initiatives (Hampshire, K, Hills, E and Iqbal, N: 2005); as an institutional legacy of colonialism, the development binary re-establishes a linear conception of history which defines and exoticises Africa as under-developed (Mamdani, M., 1996); this thereby reinforces colonial power relations, including neo-imperial demands on policy. In this political context, issues such as those related to public health are framed as development issues, for example the ways the growth of NCDs is characterized by WHO and the World Bank (Reubi et al., 2016); development in infrastructure such as mobile phone technology is often wrongly assumed to lead to ‘development’ in relations or power dynamics (Archambault, 2017; de Bruijn, 2014); development often draws on normative stances and conceptions of personhood, such as an aversion to inter-dependence (Nussbaum 2000: 247; Englund, H, 2008). And at an inter-personal level, ‘development’ initiatives run by white European or American staff reinforce conceptions of ‘white saviourism’ (Cole, T. 2016).

However, despite these important critiques of ‘development’ within academia, and increasingly in public spheres via social media, during the ethnography, ‘development’ emerged as an everyday idiom for characterising social life, sometimes representing ambivalence towards the present, or aspirations for the future. As one shopkeeper wondered, business “used to be more than this… I don’t know if it’s development or poverty bringing this now”, with incomes decreasing whilst things become more expensive. Karlström has argued that an earlier imperial ideology of history as progress towards a Euro-Christian future was later domesticated in Uganda within a more ‘organic’ understanding of growth, as applicable to agriculture, reproduction or maturation (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 604). Evidently, this processual concept of social history has latterly
been expanded with relevance to life in the city, for example in relation to ‘the vicissitudes of the market’, urban development and education. Like Achola, some participants understand ‘development’ as a process of improvement, hoping that their own life chances could ‘develop’ with the gradual influx of middle-class people in the Lusozi Godown area. A 60-year-old local councilor compared the ‘growth’ of Lusozi to the growth of a child, or their progress through school,

“The child grows slowly, slowly, starts walking and starts talking. So, the same thing with Lusozi…they have injected money, doing this and that…You aim for the better one. Like now you go to school from nursery, to Primary 1 you aim better, better, better, until the top, like University, like now you”.

As in this analogy of a child’s linear progress through school, development is also closely related to education. With these established connotations of ‘development’ and ‘modernity’, school children can gain the identity of being educated and therefore ‘modern’ (Meinert, 2009, p. 7; Onyango-Ouma, W., 2006, p. 393). School education, beyond its practical necessity today, evokes “collective and individual hopes and dreams about the future” (Meinert, 2009, p. 163), offering the potential for social mobility and closing the gap between what is sought and what is possible (ibid, 166).

If education is potentially enabling, mobilising, liberating, then what is the cost of its inaccessibility (Tamale, 2020, pp. 265, 270)? Despite efforts to universalise access to education, with the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, and Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2006, people still face various disparities in seeking education and subsequent employment opportunities. This becomes apparent throughout this thesis in various participants responses about the challenges they face in paying school fees. Some researchers argue that Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), the privatisation of social services initiated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s, have undermined the state’s capacity to provide education and social security (Bukuluki and Mubiru, 2014, p. 42; Ferguson, 2006, p. 16; Tamale, 2020, p. 50). Higher education is particularly elitist, being increasingly commercialised and therefore reserved for those “from the higher echelons of society” (Nyanzi, S., 2015, p. 131). With school conferring essential skills for employment and a certain ‘modern’ identity, what Bourdieu defines as ‘cultural capital’, barriers to accessing education can therefore reproduce inequities and sustain them across generations (Bourdieu, P, 1986; Meinert, 2004; Nyanzi, S., 2015; Onyango-Ouma, W., 2006). As 60-year-old Godfrey put
it, “this development, if a person is not educated, they will suffer the costs”. As relevant to this thesis, ‘cultural capital’ can also be conferred by access to digital tools like smartphones and their capacities, ‘digital capital’, which is also convertible to other forms of capital such as health and education itself (Hampshire et al., 2015).

School provides literacy, numeracy, health, social and organisational skills, essential for participation in today’s economy. However, studies have found the formal curriculum in East African contexts to be inadequate, or irrelevant, to lived experiences and immediate needs, particularly in rural areas (Onyango-Ouma, W., 2006, p. 394; Honwana, A.M., 2012, p.3). This is underlined by the fact that it’s a legal requirement for classes across rural and urban schools to be taught in English, reflecting and reinforcing the “hegemony” of the language in Uganda (NankINDu, Kirunda & Ogavu, 2015). As shown in chapter 4, this is evident in the education of some of the older woman in Lusozi which is primarily focused on the English language; some joked that they had been in Primary 1 for 10 years as a result. To Kenyan academic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, English being “the main determinant of a child’s progress up the ladder of formal education” (Thiong’o, 2005, p. 12) alienates school children from their culture, oral traditions, memory and history (ibid, p. 17). Nyamnjoh agrees, finding that whilst Euro-American languages and knowledge systems are championed, existing knowledge traditions are overlooked, and colonial social divisions enhanced (Nyamnjoh, 2013, p. 128). Older participants express this tension in terms of the shifting emphasis they have witnessed in their lifetimes, from the knowledge of elders to knowledge gained at school or through ‘dotcom’, and the impact that this has on their relationship with their children. This thesis therefore seeks to acknowledge these hierarchies in ways of knowing, which underlie the academic research process and the history of anthropology itself. As far as possible, the thesis seeks to address imbalances by adopting a ‘convivial’ framework, which is outlined in what follows.

**Convivial Scholarship**

Generosity was continually extended to me throughout my time working in Lusozi Godown. Many people were extremely hospitable to me and my research, in particular Amor, my co-researcher and translator who grew up in Lusozi Godown, and her whole family; her dad Kilongeni, her mum Adu, her brothers and sisters, and her late Jaja (grandmother). Hope, at the time the Woman’s Councillor of the Lusozi division (local councillor three or LC3), permitted me to spend 16 months working there, and supported the project in various ways, for example
by allowing me to regularly attend her women’s group meetings. The speaker of this group, who will be named Winston, became my lapbonya (teacher) of Acholi language, among many other things. Most of the local councillors in the area, known as local councillor one (LC1) at village level and local councillor two (LC2) at parish level, were also supportive of the project, and were generous with their time. The local hospital, in particular the physiotherapy department, allowed me to conduct research there, observing consultations and interviewing health workers. I was widely hosted by many other people, given food, stories, time and protection. Beyond that, I was accepted within families, as a daughter and sister. Finnström, a Swedish anthropologist who worked in the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda, argues that this tendency to extend family relationships to non-kin means that being an outsider during long-term ethnographic research in this context does not necessarily infer ‘empirical inferiority’ (Finnström, 2008, p. 16). And Katrien Pype, who works with older people in Kinshasha, found her identity as a young white woman from Europe to be an advantage in accessing ‘the lifeworlds of the elderly’, in part due to up-front initial expectations of financial or bureaucratic assistance (Pype, 2016, p. 215). It is true that my ethnography also benefited from the openness of participants to new relationships. And similar material expectations were quickly made of me, but when unmet, were also as quickly forgotten.

But there was also an essential imbalance in the fact of my presence as a Euro-American visitor in Africa. The on-going history in which our forefathers colonised the continent, stole its knowledge, resources and people, thwarted customs, religions, borders, languages and re-wrote (hi)stories; violence of incomprehensible depth and breadth. Yet it is the same history which allowed me to take what is still so often a one-way journey, a white British researcher in encounter with a Black Ugandan experience. In most day-to-day social interactions in Lusozi, these imbalances were not foregrounded, but it is important to note that there are no neutral visitors in this inherited context.

This context has significant implications for conducting research, which should be considered and explicit throughout, from methodology, to analysis, to dissemination. As Nyamnjoh cautions in ‘divining the future of anthropology in Africa’, it is not “as if anything is knowable to anyone who comes knocking with questions” (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 68). His ‘divination’ includes the following critical approaches; firstly, as has been introduced here, in recognising the ways I am socially and historically linked to the place where I have been doing research. These complex historical ties will also explicitly emerge in participant’s depictions of colonialism, ‘the West’, education and ‘development’. Secondly, to acknowledge that producing observations and
interpretations of social realities through interactions and dialogue means that they are actually co-produced (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 68). This can involve mutual assumptions about identity such as race, class, sexuality, gender, income and education level, which can inform the way experiences are expressed (Jackson, 1998a; Moore, 1994). For instance, being in dialogue with me may have encouraged a particular reflection on how their own values may differ from the monopolising ideals of where I’m from, a “social imagination” (Coe, C., 2020) which manifests in the everyday characterisation and experience of ageing. This is evident for example in the cited analogy of Lusozi’s development as a child’s progress through school, “until the top, like University, like now you”. Thirdly, through avoiding a ‘single story’ and considering stories from many perspectives through sympathetic and critical description. Finally, by prioritising the everyday, banal, ‘taken-for-granted’ stuff, relationships and the (extra)ordinary. The picture I present is built from the ground up, based on observable patterns in the stories, idioms, shared concerns and aspirations, work and routines, home and family lives, as encountered during the research.

By here foregrounding ‘unknowability’, I am also paying respect to what Nyamnjoh has termed ‘convivial scholarship’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017). He describes conviviality as the celebration of ‘incompleteness’, rather than the futile and violent pursuit of ‘completeness’ familiar to much Western scholarship. Where education systems remain resolutely colonial and unequal (Nyanzi, S., 2015), ‘convivial scholarship’ broadens the limitations of neat categories and hierarchies. Conviviality prioritises interconnection with other people and the (super)natural, which draws on interdependence, dialogue and compassion; arguably reflecting both the aspirations of anthropology, as well as the ideal of ‘togetherness’ often discussed with participants in Lusozi. Convivial scholarship in such settings should therefore be a “quest for knowledge in its complexity and nuance”, with open-ended methodology and analysis; “with convivial scholarship, there are no final answers, only permanent questions” (Nyamnjoh, 2017). As in much ethnographic research (Fetterman, 2010), my methodology was founded on attempting to respond flexibly and empathetically to the setting and the people I have been working with, ‘allowing different truths and voices to emerge’ (Obbo, 1980, p. 160). Fortunately for me, this meant my fieldwork was most often a convivial experience of seeking mutual connection through conversation, humour, dancing, learning and friendship. Ethnographic priorities of building relationships, sustained presence amongst the people you work with, and explicit acknowledgement of a limited capacity to know, were well suited and openly accommodated in my research setting. This thesis expresses my encounter, the stories I was fortunate to hear and observe.
Methodology

Following the idea of ‘convivial scholarship’, the ethnographic method is here defined by its flexibility, open-endedness and emphasis on co-production. Ethnography allows for research questions and methodological choices to follow contextual realities. This means that I have drawn from a variety of methods to accommodate both the breadth of research interests, as well as the preferences of participants. Primarily, the research was based on qualitative methods, including interviews and participant observation. Overall, we conducted over 250 interviews, with many key participants taking part in multiple interviews over the course of the research. As shown in the chart below, participants include: 85 older women (average age 53); 60 older men (average age 54); 21 younger people (below 40), including 8 men and 13 women; 31 health workers, including doctors, nurses and administrators at the government hospital, as well as private clinicians and traditional healers; 17 political and religious leaders, including local councillors, imams and pastors; 18 mobile services providers; 17 older men and women, relatives of participants in Kampala who live in rural northern Uganda; seven age-related NGO representatives. Health workers, service providers, politicians and religious leaders are broadly exposed to issues across their institution and community, so interviews with them are particularly helpful in understanding the wider context. All research was approved by relevant institutions including Lusoozi hospital, the University College London ethics board (UCL), Makerere School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (MAKSS REC) and the Ugandan National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST), and all participation was based on fully informed consent.

Like other researchers working with older people in Uganda (Golaz et al., 2017; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Nyanzi, 2009), interviews in the community were in-depth, face to face conversations in people’s homes, often over the course of about an hour. In the home setting, interviews were generally informal and conversational in tone, with open-ended questions allowing for participants’ interpretations. The discussions were dictated as much as possible by the participant and their interests; their business or family concerns, for example, and the “taken-for-granted stuff of everyday life” (Finnström, 2008, p. 9; Gupta, 34)xxxiv. As shown in Golaz, Rutaremwa’s and Wandera’s study of support systems for older adults in Uganda (Golaz et al., 2017), visiting one area in Kampala over a long period of time enhances an in-depth interview focus on familial relations. Often other people in the household would join the conversation too, including husbands, wives, siblings, neighbours and adult children. Where consented, we recorded these interviews and transcribed them verbatim, as evident in various citations throughout the
monograph. To support the open-access dissemination aims of the project, we also took photographs and made nine short films, some of which are included throughout the thesis as optional viewing.

Interviews are of considerable benefit to this volume as they provide an opportunity to gain and share insight based on someone’s own words and stories, privileging participants’ voices over the researchers. As Ugandan medical anthropologist and activist Stella Nyanzi advocates, building on Ugandan anthropologist Christine Obbo’s work, research should allow for the incorporation of older people’s, particularly older women’s, voices, “because their voices [do] not get ‘muted’ with age. They understand their circumstances well and can best articulate it for themselves” (Nyanzi, 2009, cf. Obbo, 1980). As in Sara Ahmed’s work on feminist knowledge and writing,

“Staying close to the everyday still involves attending to words, and thus concepts, like happiness, like will. I am still listening for resonance. I think of feminism as poetry; we hear histories in words; we reassemble histories by putting them into words…feminist ideas are what we come up with to make sense of what persists” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 12).

These words are the material from which a broader picture and analysis can be built, through thematic coding, identifying patterns and anomalies in what people have told, and considering these in relation to wider literature, analyses and statistics. A concept is built through description, offering “a different slant on the same thing” (ibid, 13), supported with ‘companion texts’ - “resources to make sense of something that had been beyond your grasp” (ibid, 16). This approach is based broadly on the principle of grounded theory, whereby insights emerge from the evidence rather than being ‘pre-established’ (Hampshire et al., 2017).

Of course, relying on people’s words and stories alone does not provide unmediated understanding of their experiences; the ways experiences are expressed can be dictated by various factors, including an interplay of the interviewer and interlocutor’s identities (Moore, 1994, p. 3), and the preference for both to be well received by each other and those around them. This means that learnings from this study are not considered to be objective knowledge but ‘partial truths’ (Clifford, J. and Marcus, G., 1986; Haraway, 1988; Moore, 1994; Tsing, 1993), a situated understanding that is formed or ‘co-constructed’ through dialogue. This is why it is also important to contextualise interviews within general participant observation based on close proximity over 16 months. Participant observation implies taking part in different social settings, whilst acknowledging the ethnographer’s role as researcher and observer. To some extent, this is continuous throughout casual encounter and conversation, particularly in public spaces, such as
in the market and the central bar in Lusozi Godown. As will be expanded in chapter four on social relations, I also participated directly in different community groups, primarily in three groups which are well attended by older people. I attended the weekly meetings of Place of Peace, a group formed by an international, faith-based NGO to support single mothers. It is considered by local leadership and others in the community as the only NGO effectively supporting people in Godown. Many of the older women who participated in the research are also part of this group. As outlined in chapter 4, the discussions during the meetings, and with members during individual interviews, offered extensive learning about expectations of social relations in relation to family and community and the role of women. The other two community groups are Ribe Aye Teko Organisation or ‘RATO’ (*Unity is Strength*), and Angamalonyi (*Who should enrich you*?), which are primarily savings groups or Savings and Cooperative Credit Organisations (SACCOs), of which there are many in Godown and across the world. In savings groups, people save money collectively as a way of rotating or accumulating and growing funds and providing a financial safety net for members. Angamalonyi is mostly a women’s group, and every Sunday the beneficiary of the savings exchange is celebrated with a ceremony of gift-giving and dancing, which I often attended. RATO’s members are primarily men, and they generously agreed to share their constitution with me and allow me to join as a saving member for a year. This offered an opportunity to participate in a group started by Acholi elders to encourage togetherness in the Lusozi community.

For the purpose of collecting more systematic data, we also conducted surveys with 250 respondents on household information and phone use. Quantitative data outlined throughout the monograph will be derived from the following five surveys:

1) An initial household survey with 50 participants. This sought basic household information during the primary stage of the research, such as the age and gender of residents, ownership of phones and preferred health services.

2) A survey on phone use with 50 participants. This survey asked people about their: phone call history, prior use of mobile money, use of internet and social media, and phone sharing practices.

3) A survey on mobile money use with 200 participants. Amor asked willing mobile money customers at a particular stand over 3 days to outline their relationship to the sender or recipient, the amount of money and the purpose for sending.
4) A detailed listing of phone and app content with 30 participants. We asked participants to open up their phone, show their apps, and describe their use of them.

5) A final survey of 150 participants for comparative data across the ASSA project, and for additional household and financial data. This consolidated certain findings, reiterated questions on phone use, and asked final questions relevant to findings about their regular income and outgoings.

These survey data are useful to corroborate qualitative observations, as well as providing new insights. Surveys on phone use in particular aimed to take advantage of the opportunity to gain insight into what people actually do with their phones, which may be forgotten or overlooked in interviews. For example, tracing phone calls and remittances within the family, to and from the home village, offers an understanding of social relations and intergenerational care more broadly (de Bruijn, 2014). Furthermore, survey data is also helpful in communicating findings across different disciplines; collaborating mobile health practitioners, for example, particularly valued data on phone habits.

From these methodological choices, through to analysis and dissemination, this project champions flexibility, open-endedness, inquisitiveness, empathy, interaction, and collaboration as productive ways of knowing. When applying this to practical recommendations and projects related to policy, education or health services, the aim would often be to better accommodate people’s everyday lived realities, and to alleviate the inequities which can be seen to perpetually reproduce themselves and constrain people’s life chances. These aims and underlying biases are reflected throughout the thesis. The reader is also asked to keep in mind throughout that knowledge about a particular social reality is always going to be incomplete, particularly from someone who “comes knocking with questions” (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 68). As in Nyamnjoh’s *convivial scholarship*, an awareness of these limits also recognises the potential of seeking social knowledge “in its complexity and nuance”, through “permanent questions and questioning”, without any final answers (Nyamnjoh, 2017).

**Thesis Contribution to Anthropological Literature**

The following chapter 2 focuses on ideals of ageing as they characterise the experiences of older people today and inform ways of ‘living together’ with family and neighbours. The ethnography shows how, despite challenges of the ‘dotcom era’, values of respect and relatedness are invoked and lived meaningfully. This ethnography therefore offers nuance to what is generally conceived
as a linear trajectory of decline in the social status and experience of older people in Uganda and across Africa (e.g. Aboderin, 2004; Maharaj, 2020; Maniragaba et al., 2019; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Nzabona et al., 2016; Oppong, 2006; Susan Whyte, 2017; van der Geest, 1997). Where this decline is observed by participants, a standard is set to which present experiences of ageing deviate and to which people can work towards. Whilst the ideal of home-based intergenerational care for older people is evidently difficult to attain in today’s economy, many older participants in this research told me that they still feel respected and have many young people from across the community coming to seek their advice, particularly about how to resolve domestic issues. This presented a clear distinction to Van der Geest’s research in rural Ghana, where older people say they no longer have young people coming to them for advice, which he terms “a social death prior to death” (Van der Geerst, 2011, p. 73). Perhaps this distinction merely reflects a contextual difference, and particularly the impact of ageing in a rural setting on intergenerational relationships and the relevance of older people’s knowledge; however, early in the research, discussions about intergenerational advice initiated a further enquiry into the ways in which elder seniority and respect continues to be up-held in Lusozi, often explicitly through health-related uses of the phone. This is illustrated in the subsequent chapter 5 on the uses of the phone as it is ‘domesticated’ within existing social expectations and across social networks. This chapter supplements the few anthropological studies of phone use in Uganda specifically (Burrell, 2010; Namatovu and Saebo, 2015; Svensson and Wamala Larsson, 2016, 2018; Vokes, 2018), and the many in Africa more broadly (e.g. Archambault, 2017, 2013; de Bruijn, 2014, 2009; Hampshire et al., 2015; Porter et al., 2020, 2015; Pype, K., 2017) by offering the otherwise overlooked perspective of older people on the intergenerational implications of the phone. In light of this perspective, the phone forms a lens onto broader trajectories of both continuity and change; the former often an interest of studies in digital anthropology (e.g. de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2012, p. 2; Horst and Miller, 2012, 2006), the latter more popularly associated with the advent of mobile technology (Vokes, 2018). In doing so, the ethnography offers new insights about the domestication of the phone in Kampala, often as a platform for “care at a distance” (Ahlin, 2018; Pols, 2012) or a “transportal home” (Miller, 2021). At the same time, the smartphone is often characterised as a symbol of social disruption, for example in offering young people access to more knowledge than their elders. Discursive characterisations of the phone are particularly important in this context, where a rapidly growing minority of around 30% access smartphones, and where their capacities are increasingly politicised and regulated such as through the 2018 ‘social media tax’. This systematic study about everyday uses of the phone alongside an analytical consideration of the ways they are characterised is therefore particularly timely.
This ethnographic lens onto social trajectories is further sharpened in the subsequent chapter 6, which details how family expectations for elder care are re-configured across distances and generations. Care for older people has been highlighted by various critical medical anthropologists as both a global political issue and an intimate, embodied experience (Buch, 2015; Fassin, 2009; Kehr, J., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017; Kleinman, 2015). Chapter 6 seeks to contribute to this literature on age and care by outlining associations made by health workers, older participants and their relatives between global processes and experiences of chronic non-communicable diseases and care in later life. This includes the socio-economic determinants of chronic illness or what Fassin calls the ‘politics of life’ (2009), the impact of neoliberalism on state healthcare and economic conditions, intensifying obligations to self and family (Han, 2012; Kehr, J., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017), as well as what Cati Coe terms a “social imagination” of institutionalised elder care in other contexts (Coe, C., 2020). This analysis thereby aligns with this existing literature in critical medical anthropology on ageing and care which seeks to radically contextualise intimate and everyday care practices. In highlighting ‘self-care’ practices and ways of maintaining health, such as through self-prescribing, exercise and physical work, nutrition and relieving stress, the ethnography also offers an original perspective on the idea of ‘successful ageing’ in East Africa as ‘desired interdependence’ (Mcintosh, T., 2017; Susan Whyte, 2017), with various participants claiming they would rather avoid being a burden on their children by taking care of their own health and finances.

This perspective on self-responsibility is also grounded in detailed discussion of older participant’s working routines and on-going family responsibilities in chapter 3. This discussion disrupts linear or chronological conceptions of age and work (Honwana, 2012, p. 12), or the stereotype of old age as a time for retirement in the village (Nyanzi, 2009), with ethnographic examples of older participant’s working routines and on-going family responsibilities. This detailed ethnography of work aligns with Harvey and Krohn-Hansen’s anthropological concept of labour (2018), an analytic which situates everyday experiences of seeking livelihood amidst the increasing precarity and unevenness of global capitalism, and in the specific historical circumstances of Lusozi (2018, p. 22). This chapter shows that physical work can risk health, and health can risk work; a sense of the risk involved is often invoked in the depiction of work as ‘gambling’, blurring any boundaries between work and sociality, already disrupted in businesses reliant on domestic and neighbourhood relations. It concludes with recommendations for the provision of social security for older people continuing to run their own businesses in later life, likely to be an increasingly pertinent issue as population age and economic instability increases around the world.
In line with the ethnographic focus on strategies for managing economic uncertainty, chapter 4 offers detailed description of participation in three community groups, which seeks to ground and illuminate the discussion about pragmatic forms of ‘togetherness’ within the neighbourhood, and the opportunities and complexities that arise thereof. The theme of cooperative moralities is then drawn out in chapter 7, which draws from anthropological theorising on ‘the moral moment’ in Uganda (Allen, 2015; Baral, 2016; Boyd, 2013; Doherty, 2020; Finnström, 2008; Karlström et al., 2004; Kyaddondo, D., 2008; Monteith, 2018; Tamale, 2020; Whyte et al., 2016). and elsewhere (Englund, H, 2008; Lambek, Das, Fassin, Keane, 2015; Muehlebach, 2013; Nguyen et al, 2017; Robbins, 2007; Zigon, 2007). The ethnographic examples outlined concretely illustrate what anthropology can offer to an understanding of morality as it emerges through interaction and particularly when exposed by a disrupted sense of relational personhood. This in turn contributes to an understanding of anthropological responsibilities in Lusozi and more broadly, discussed further in the conclusion.
Chapter 2  
Elders in the City

This chapter considers ideals of ageing as they are observably brought to life both rhetorically and through practice. The ethnographic stories re-told here emphasise the fluidity of ideals adapted to contemporary ‘dotcom’ lifestyles in the city, and as dotcom lifestyles are customised. This emphasis has particular implications given the historical context of Lusozi. Various scholars of Ugandan history and social life have highlighted how customs have been instrumentalised by colonialization, imposing fixity on otherwise fluid and dynamic social groups, norms and practices (Finnström, 2008, p. 82; Mamdani, M., 1996; Nyanzi, 2013; p'Bitek, 1986; Tamale, 2020; Allen, 2007; Mbembe, 2002); customary land ownership, community justice systems, family expectations, community hierarchies, music and dance, ethnic identity. This colonial, anthropological ‘Othering’ has ‘denied coevalness’ (Fabian, 1983; Clifford, 1986; Robbins, 2013) and falsely codified ‘tradition’ and difference to sustain inequities (Mbembe, 2002, p. 246).

Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani outlines how the colonial framing of the ‘customary’ in rural areas, such as through Chieftaincies and land ownership, ensured the stability of colonial rule (1996). This includes enforced market distinctions between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’, direct and indirect rule through ‘civilised law’ and exclusion thereof. Equally, ‘customary’ is a language for resisting the institutional legacies of colonialism, meaning it can be both emancipatory and authoritarian (ibid). The reification of customary justice mechanisms for political ends, for example, belies the flexibility of otherwise situated, habitual and unnamed community practices (Allen, 2007), which can both reinforce patriarchal hierarchies (ibid) and be employed to seek gender justice (Tamale, 2020, p. 161). Anthropologists working in the Acholi sub-region after the LRA war have analysed discussions around Acholi ideals as a ‘romantic’ nostalgia for a more communitarian past in the village. For example, Porter terms this “a vision of a kind of continuous static past” (Porter, 2019, p. 1025), through which people assert their identity, shared values and ideals, reflecting a ‘human tendency to think of the past as better, simpler or purer’ (ibid, p.1027). In contrast, Tamale resists analyses where a celebration of African values represents “a naïve desire to return to a romanticised pre-colonial past” (Tamale, 2020, p. 21), arguing that instead it represents a ‘lived experience’ of moral traditions related to human dignity, communitarianism and egalitarianism, which hold the potential for the restoration of social justice and dignity (Tamale, 2020, p. 229). Pype has similarly noted a ‘practical nostalgia to restore the esteem of elders and create conviviality’ in Kinshasha, DRC (Pype, 2017, p. 169).
This analysis therefore advocates an approach which seeks to understand the concessional and convivial ‘middle ground’ between continuity and change (Nyamnjoh, 2017). This chapter therefore seeks to acknowledge this ‘middle ground’ through an emphasis on the everyday relevance of ageing ideals based on respect and relatedness; a language for forging social possibilities, both of continuity and mutability.

Ideals and experiences of ageing in Lusozi are of course multiple, depending on ethnicity and religion, and on the gender, income, health, lifestyle and family circumstances of the older person. As in the rest of Kampala (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996), the population of Lusozi is extremely diverse, with mixed lifestyles, economic statuses and ethnicities. Family cultures including language, intergenerational expectations, food, marriage and burial customs, household structures, music and dance, religion, spiritual beliefs and practices, are therefore varied. The perspectives of multiple participants are included regardless of their background, to portray the multi-ethnicity of voices throughout the research and the context, and the encounters between them. However, as in the rest of the monograph, this chapter will focus mostly on Acholi ideals and experiences, given that the majority of Lusozi residents and research participants originate in the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda. The violence and disruption of the LRA war in the region between 1986 and 2006 is thought to have had a devastating impact on social life. As one research paper on ‘traditional justice’ towards the end of the war put it, “the social infrastructure of the north has been almost completely destroyed”xxx. Now, Acholi social ideals and relational expectations may be discursively associated temporally with the pre-War past, geographically with the village and personally with elders (Porter, 2019; Tim Allen, 1988). In their re-telling here, these ideals are also evidently experientially pertinent, re-located and adapted to life in the capital city. Home is reconfigured and continuities negotiated between the generations. This is evident in efforts to up-hold elder roles and respectability by the older members of “scattered families” (Coe, 2014; Sigona et al., 2015) encountered in Lusozi, who, despite on-going insecurities, seek to educate the ‘dotcom’ generation, to mobilise support for their elderly relatives in the village, and to heed their advice.

The chapter opens with further contextualisation of ageing in Uganda, including contemporary political and generational struggles, and the role of dotcom and specifically social media. This context is then related to representative conversations about expectations related to ageing, how contemporary experiences in Lusozi deviate from them, and how people work to up-hold them regardless. This outline of perspectives on ageing in Lusozi is then further narrowed and expanded through conversations with Ladit, a prominent Acholi elder in the neighbourhood.
Ladit read the chapter and offered some additional explanatory notes about Acholi culture and dance, translated by Amor’s Dad Kilongeni, with the most relevant sections included in the appendix. This aims to depict a written sense of the ethnography as an on-going dialogue, and also to stress the relevance of the discussion in the chapter regarding the re-affirmation of traditional values and practices in the dotcom era. As Ladit writes, “factors from within and other outside factors like western culture has greatly affected our life”. In response, he ‘appeals to the renewal of traditional ways’ (p’Bitek et al., 1984, p. 12) through the adaptation of Acholi music and dance for relevance to the young people in the diverse Kampala community. Overall, the chapter offers nuance to pervasive discourses about declining respect for elders in the dotcom era, as well as ethnographic insight into the lived mutability of values as they erode, withstand or swell with the “dotcom wave”, sometimes “with novel outcomes”(Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 40).

Ageing in Uganda

In a context impacted by war, the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Hoffman and Pype, 2016, p. 2; Nankwanga et al., 2013), economic crises, urban flux and development, youth ‘underemployment’ (Kiranda, Y. Walter, M. Mugisha, M., 2017) and rapid population growth, (in)formal care infrastructures are under increasing strain. Social support systems are typically reliant on intergenerational reciprocity (Golaz et al., 2017), through which parents educate their children who in turn support them in later life, an unwritten contract between generations or ‘intergenerational wealth-flows’ (Caldwell, 1976; Hampshire and Randall, 2005); as one older woman succinctly explained, “they are supposed to support me because I supported them”. In the current economy, even if they are still motivated to do so, educated children may not be able to afford to support their parents (Whyte, 2017, p. 246). HIV/AIDS has been particularly disruptive of intergenerational support systems, killing many people in the ‘middle’ generation of today, leaving grandparents with orphaned grandchildren and without care for themselves (Hoffman and Pype, 2016; Kuteesa et al., 2012; van der Geest, 1997). This context underlies widely held concerns about the declining experience of older people, amongst older participants, researchers of ageing in Africa (Aboderin, 2004; Maharaj, 2020; Maniragaba et al., 2019; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Nzabona et al., 2016; Oppong, 2006; Susan Whyte, 2017; van der Geest, 1997), advocacy organisations and NGOS, health workers and government bodies.
In Uganda, these concerns are particularly pertinent following recent political events surrounding the ageing President and his youth-centric opposition, intensifying intergenerational tensions and legitimating ageist attitudes. This comes amidst a shifting demographic context in terms of population ageing, in which older people are a growing and increasingly marginalised minority. This marginalisation is evident in reporting on these politico-demographic issues, with ageing being an explicit media focus precipitated by political events during the time of the research. In January 2018, Museveni, now 73, succeeded in extending the Presidential age limit ahead of the 2021 elections. Having already amended the constitutional two-term limit to now serve his sixth, this resolution met with much opposition, including corruption allegations, repressed demonstrations, parliamentary chaos and social media campaigns. Media commentary of the events in national newspapers and on social media was littered with terms of contempt for his age; “washed up”, “slow”, “weak”, “incapable”. Bobi Wine, opposition leader and proclaimed “spokesman for Uganda’s frustrated youth”, has termed the age limit debate “a generational cause”.

Generational struggles have frequently characterised politics on the African continent in this way (Durham, 2000). The President and his opposition reference idioms of age, ‘elder’, ‘grandparenthood’ and ‘youth’, which invoke an ‘imagination of power’ (ibid p. 116) and familial relationships. For example, on his Twitter feed and in public speeches, Museveni addresses the people of Uganda as ‘bazukulu’, ‘grandchildren’. Older political and economic leaders like Museveni are thought to withhold opportunities from the young, maintaining their positions of power and preventing progress. Intergenerational relationships are thus charged with resentment, ‘youth frustration’, economic uncertainty and structural exclusion (Thieme, 2018), with older people blamed for the ‘hardships faced by the younger generation’ (Hoffman and Pype, 2016, p. 47), and younger people blamed for a sense of societal and moral decline (Whyte and Acio, 2017).

The social media tax, named the ‘Over the Top’ (OTT) tax, similarly invoked intergenerational tensions in the political sphere. Amongst criticisms of the ageing President and his contemporaries refusing opportunities to younger people, social media appeared as a central tool and object of this positioning of the young in place of old. The implementation of the tax provoked various petitions, including social media hashtag campaigns such as #ThisTaxMustGo. ‘People power’ protests led by Bobi Wine attracted significant media attention. In a national news segment on NTV Uganda recording the protests, the microphone was denied to an older man, who was told by one of the young men, “you’re the people making us suffer”. This story
was of particular concern to a Ugandan social gerontologist and representative on the National Council of Older Persons I spoke with. He felt the idea of old people as “outdated is extending down, it’s having an impact on people’s opinions”. The committee for older persons that he has organised in his district just outside of Kampala expressed similar concerns when he told them about this news segment during a meeting I attended. One older man exclaimed: “this is terrible…if people power just means youth. It should be holistic otherwise it can affect one section of society, and yet we are all in this together”. The image of the microphone being denied to an older person by younger people exemplifies concerns about increasing contempt for older people, disrupted hierarchies of age and apportioned blame for concerns regarding the political economy. As in this older man’s response, the preference to ‘stay all in this together’ is seen to be disregarded by the younger generation, to the detriment of older people’s experiences and society as a whole.

Discussions around new media can therefore locate concerns about intergenerational relationships in this context, both in the sense of public discourses discussed here, and in the comments of older people in Lusozi about the younger generation. Global media, the internet and its influence are sometimes described as dotcom, younger people today as ‘the dotcom generation’ or ‘the children of dotcom’. Dotcom is a term that comes up in everyday conversation, during interviews and at gatherings, usually meant and received with humour. Often it is said by older people who are referring broadly to modern developments. One 52-year-old man described dotcom as “like the New Testament, something recent...modern, jumping from the old to the new”. In particular, dotcom can refer to the phenomenon of ‘westernisation’ through exposure via new media, which applies especially to the younger ‘dotcom generation’ who have grown up with it. In the dotcom discourse, age becomes symbolic of (ir)relevance to popular culture, technology and ‘the city’. This thesis traces how people domesticate ‘dotcom’ by showing how it is incorporated in existing expectations related to ageing, which are further discussed in the following sections.

**Defining Elders**

The ASSA study initially proposed a focus on the experience of ageing for people at mid-life, 45-70 years old, neither young nor old. In line with the World Health Organization (WHO), various researchers of ageing in East Africa set the boundary for ‘old’ at 50 and above due to the perceptions of their participants (de Klerk and Moyer, 2017; Kuteesa et al., 2012; Velkoff and
Kowal, 2007). Some participants in this research would similarly determine ‘oldness’ to apply to those over 50, and ‘elderly’ to those over 60. However, according to many participants, including health workers, researchers of ageing and age-based advocacy organizations in Kampala, age is more likely to be determined by the experience and health of the individual, as well as their income and ‘environment’. This has been understood anthropologically as the ‘local biology’ of ageing or the ‘bio-social’ factors, where the body and its socio-cultural environment intersects, re-shaping experience throughout the life course (Livingston, 2003; Lock, 1994). Various participants consider that poverty, manual labour, alcohol use, poor nutrition and chronic illness can manifest as ‘oldness’, regardless of a person’s age. As 43-year-old plumber Godfrey stated during an interview, “you know you can get somebody who is 25, but when you don’t take care of your life, you drink excessively, you do other things wrong, you become old.”

The founder of The Aged Family Uganda (TAFU), an NGO for older people in Kampala, explained that “middle age doesn’t really exist” as some people grow old before 45 if their health is bad, or their lifestyle “harsh”. He gave the example of financially poor older people, who have restricted access to food, medicine and care. ‘Oldness’ was also considered by some people to reflect a personal mindset or attitude towards life. At an event organised by TAFU for older people, 82-year-old Victor refused to describe himself as old. Despite visual impairment, he keeps in contact with his three children now living in West Africa, having made himself a braille phone directory. “Age is just a number. I’m not youth, not aged, but mature”. He thinks age is defined by what you want to do, and he wants to dance. He feels that people over 70 are forgotten, that they have exceeded their life expectancy so they are “already dead and cannot help you”. But he has seen that younger people than him have died, so he knows it’s not age that kills people. “Me I don’t believe I’m old – I’ve still got ideas”. He hopes to start a potato farm, and meanwhile keeps active with his housework and his young grandchildren. With age defined by a variety of factors, both personal and social, it can be understood as a dynamic and negotiated state, rather than a fixed entity. Official and unofficial age categories are not natural, but instead constituted by shared meanings, and therefore embedded in personal and institutional relationships.

Anthropological literature on ‘age-grades’ and initiation rites in pastoral East and Southern Africa also demonstrate the cultural constitution of social categories of age, and contradictory elements such as power conflicts that arose thereof (Durham, 2000: 115). For example, Evans-Pritchard famously described the age group characteristics of the Nuer, the ‘age-set system’, and how lineage organisation was established through age initiations based on the father’s authority and the need to show respect to
older ‘age-sets’, which regulated social interaction (Evans-Pritchard, 1967). Older people in Uganda also typically hold authority within their households and communities. In particular, whilst age initiation customs are not practiced amongst the Acholi (Whyte and Acio, 2017: 20), Acholi society is gerontocratic, with elders occupying leadership positions within their family, clan and community (Finnstrom, S., 2001), with the authority to allocate land (Whyte and Acio, 2017) and mediate disputes (Parkin, 1969, p.144). Their decisions are taken on behalf of the collective, to be respected or enforced.

As well as relational definitions of who is old, there are flexible notions of what it means to be old related to elderliness and seniority (Hoffman and Pype, 2016). An Acholi elder can be as young as 40 years old, depending on their life experience and family role. Acholi elder leadership is defined beyond, and superior to, material status or level of education. Only respectable older people with applicable experience can be nominated as an elder. Acholi poet p’Bitek describes how older people who ‘do not behave well, like little children’, are derisively called ‘la-pang cata’ or ‘without direction’, in order to encourage them to behave appropriately ‘according to the culture’ (p’Bitek, 1986, p. 28). Equally, young Acholi people are described as ‘odoko dano’ once they ‘become human’, when their personal conduct is manifest and in line with the ‘fundamental ideas of society’ (p’Bitek, 1986, p. 28). A central aspect of up-holding expected conduct based on age is respect, which is discussed in the following section.

**Respect and Respectability**

There is a Luganda proverb, ‘bukadde magezi’, old age is wisdom (Nyanzi, 2009). Older people in Uganda have been described as ‘repositories of knowledge’, storytellers of their wisdom, inherited from ancestors or gained through life experience (Nahemow, 1979). This could include experience with bringing up children, or agricultural knowledge and supervision (Livingston, 2003, p. 25). As one younger man said, “they have been around for longer, so they know what’s what”. A policeman named Denny and his wife told the story of his “Grand Grand”, his grandfather’s mother who recently died. Even though she was immobile, her “lower part like a kid”, from the waist up she was old and knowledgeable; Denny gestured to show her upright posture, lifting his arms. She had “a chunk of land” and often would give family advice, which “you should always take seriously”. “Even if you know more about the world, they have seen more than you and have wisdom”. As Denny suggests of his great-grandmother, land ownership influences the respectability and social status of older people (Nzabona and Ntozi, 2017, p.
with the land connecting them to ancestors and knowledge of the past, and also the authority to determine the access of younger generations (Whyte and Acio, 2017: 25).

The proximity of older people to spirits and ancestors, being visibly blessed with long life and closer to death themselves, also enhances their social status; the ‘spiritual power derived from their experience is to be feared and respected’ (Van der Geerst, 2011: 71). Denny and his wife explained that older people can curse or bless you, an ability that comes to some people, especially women, with age. Usually, it’s women in their 70s and 80s who “have that spirit”. Their blessings can offer long life, with their demonstrable capacity to attain the same. For example, one older woman we interviewed blessed me, wishing that one day I would “have skin and hair like her”, meaning that I grow old too. If an old woman curses you, you will “feel it” until you ask for forgiveness, and only then “things in your life will start moving”, suggesting that otherwise things remain challenging, artificially fixed in place and likely to fail. The underlying spiritual threat or opportunity when interacting with older people, especially those with authority and access to land, stresses the importance of showing respect to them, for the possibility of spiritual reward or retribution.

Many of the older people encountered in Lusozi said that they feel increasingly respected as they age. Respect is shown through greeting, chatting, listening, and the manner of approach. As 70-year-old Ssebowa told me, he can assess somebody’s respect for him in the way they speak to him, if they approach calmly, don’t “bark at him” and are not rude. Or the 51-year-old woman who feels respected “because I’m Jaja (grandmother)”; people show that respect by greeting her, talking to her “when they find me on the way”, or keeping quiet when she passes. Generally, a humble manner is preferred, which can mean a quieter and slower approach indicating deference, whilst addressing the person in the name of their socially superior position such as ‘muzee’ (old person). I saw this in the way Amor would translate my questions in this ‘calm’ manner, with a general question posed before mine, “muzee, we want to ask you a question about respect, let me bring it like this…” In Acholi culture, as in others across Uganda, this deference can also be shown through kneeling whilst greeting anyone of higher social status than you, particularly younger people to anyone older than you, or women to men. Kneeling implies respect not only for the person, but also for tradition, and suggests that a young person has had been taught how to greet properly, a ‘good family up-bringing’.

Often, older participants said they enjoy being addressed as an elder, ‘mama’, ‘muzee’ (old man/woman) or ‘jaja’ (grandfather/mother), as this signifies that they are looked up to. As
Amor’s 57-year-old dad Kilongeni explained, “I appreciate when they call me muzee…I feel great”. According to him and many others, “anybody older than you, you have to respect”. When he was growing up, he thought people with the white hair he has now “were the God people talk about…only later I learned that those are human beings like my grandfather. I respect them”. He explained that “it’s the way we’re brought up”, and that if you spend time with older people and offer them help, you will be rewarded in later life, perhaps even living longer yourself.

“The moral of the upbringing of the family must stand. Whether it is Dotcom, old age, historical age, there must be respect for the elders because they say, like the Bible says, respect your mother and father, so that your number of days will be longer and all the other blessing you will get from them. Their long life is a representative of God for you.”

Kilongeni here defends the ongoing relevance of respect for elders in the Dotcom age. In Lusozi, it was common to hear of a general trend of declining respect for older people, particularly in the city; “today, respect is given to people of material possession as opposed to age”. For example, as Ahmed, a younger man prominent in the Muslim community in Lusozi put it, “These days, they are not respected…by the time we reach the age of 15, we see them as…useless… even if they try to show you that you do this, you tell them that I can’t, are you my mother, are you my father, what?”. Often, whilst identifying this trend ‘these days’, participants would immediately distinguish themselves; as Ahmed said, “me myself I do not do that”.

Porter et al have identified a similar tendency in their study of ‘intergenerational encounters’ via the phone in various fieldsites across Africa, where ‘youngers’ differentiate their own more respectful behaviour from others (Porter et al., 2015, p. 44). Perhaps the same could be said of elders emphasising their own advisory position and respectability.

The ‘common complaint’ regarding the diminishing social status of older people (Porter et al., 2015, p. 44), traditionally associated with authority based on experience and indigenous knowledge, is often related to a worsening experience of ageing. ‘Dotcom’ in particular is thought to threaten the knowledge of elders, with younger people more exposed to the wider world. Evelyn, who is responsible for her two teenage grandsons, believes that dotcom ‘spoils kids’ and avoids it for herself:

“...This dotcom is something which can spoil if you are not strict with your children, because when we are talking and I say something, they say “these things which you are
talking are old, we don’t want to hear this”....They know more than me because now mine is pressed down and theirs is going up. Hmmm that’s dotcom...You know now if a child is born in Museveni’s regime, he knows dotcom, but me I have been ruled by many presidents. I know the problems.”

This ‘dotcom’ idiom therefore encapsulates intergenerational tensions, the authority of older people being ‘pressed down’ against youth ‘going up’. She later discussed the inevitability of the ‘dotcom wave’ against tradition and respect for elder’s knowledge through experience, telling the other older people at the final workshop hosted in Lusozi to conclude the fieldwork, that “things have changed. We should accept it. Whilst an element of tradition should remain, the dotcom wave is too much. It is not about to go back”. 60-year-old Omara also accepts the “dotcom wave”, and sees it as something he needs to learn from his sons:

“The world is changing. everything is computerised so we need to know... Dotcom, that one came after us. Now we are not at this school, now we’re trying to get at that thing from you (young) people, ‘now dotcom, what does it mean?’. We learn also from them. I ask my sons, so I can be doing it myself. He can do everything for me...my children, they respect me…in case I need anything they can do it for me.”

This shows how dotcom has in some ways reversed the roles of older and younger people as students and advisors respectively. For Omara, dotcom does not come at the expense of his sons’ respect for him. The fact that they are willing to give their time to help or teach him to use his smartphone and that he is free to ask them any questions shows their respect for him. The contrast between these two examples complicates the pervasive idea that respect for elders is directly opposed to the “dotcom wave” of education and phone use. Instead, they are complexly interrelated, so that dotcom can simultaneously invert the pedagogical relationship between older and younger generations, whilst supporting values of togetherness and respect. Dotcom, specifically in the form of smartphones and mobile phones, can also facilitate filial obligations despite wider contextual shifts, as will be explored further in chapter 5.

Changes to the social ideal of ‘wise and respected elders’ has been studied extensively by Dutch anthropologist Sjaak Van der Geest in an area of rural Ghana over the past 3 decades (1997; 2004; 2011). He argues, like participants, that the social value of older people is declining and is increasingly measured in terms of their financial capacity. In a 2011 study on ‘loneliness and distress in old age’, he found that: “the young rarely come to them [old people] for advice…they
are not interested in their knowledge” (Van der Geest, 2011, p. 71). Van der Geest terms this ‘a social death prior to death’ (ibid, 73), an indicator of the isolation and marginalization of older people. In contrast, older participants in this research explained that they have younger people seeking their advice “all the time”, which signifies respect and social relevance. Many participants said that younger people in their families and communities sought their counsel regarding marital problems and bringing up children. They often explained how they mediate domestic disputes with the aim of keeping marriages and families together. As one example of many, 45-year-old Abalo finds that people respect her, they greet her, and both men and women come to her for advice. They ask for help in settling their quarrels, and she often advises women to respect their husbands and to stay in their marriages. She also gathers all her kids together and advises them to follow her, which she thinks they will do. For example, she tells them to love people, ‘love is the only straight route’, by which she means greeting people with respect, never fighting and helping people, for which she commended Amor.

Some people described how they seek their parents’ advice via phone calls. Ojok Godfrey’s mother uses her neighbours’ phone to advise, or admonish, her 48-year-old son:

Ojok Godfrey: Ok, parents, elders, are supreme, so there’s no argument for most of them… even when you’re an adult, parents can order you to stop or do certain things.
Interviewer: And you have to do it,
O: You have to do it.
…She will call me, summons me to the village and tells me to stop.
I: She has a phone?
O: She doesn’t have a phone, but the people nearby have phones… she will call and tell them to call me. And chase me to the village...She’ll tell you why she has called…You will feel it. It happened to me some time… that was nearly six or seven years ago, I used to drink a lot and she heard of it. She wanted to come…she called me to tell me that she was coming, and she speaks only one language - Luo. She came to Kampala and looked for me and caught me.

Ojok himself acts as an Acholi elder in Lusozi. Having escaped the war in his home village in Gulu in 1991, “I was lucky”, he’s a long-term resident in Lusozi Godown. He worked to become a telecommunications engineer and his regular income has supported him to invest in his own land and build his home in the neighbourhood. As a respected Acholi elder in the community, he
described how he helps to enact discipline and enforce respect, for example amongst men who are known to beat their wives, or who fail to provide for their families;

“for us, if you do anything wrong, even when you’re grown up to my age, if you are terribly wrong, then they will call men of equal weight or even strength to come and cane you... if you don’t stop, we’ll come again one day. Because when we call you for caning, we just call you, rough you up, cane you, and then you must apologise. Even me. In our society, we still have respect, there’s certain things you can’t do. Especially in public”.

This shows how community-based approaches are considered to hold pragmatic possibilities for gender justice, through the resolution of marital disputes or management of gender-based violence (Tamale, 2020, p. 161). It also demonstrates how values of respectability are articulated and lived, even enforced, “in public”. Ojok was displaced from his home in the Acholi sub-region, enforcing separation with his family home and values. This conversation highlights how he has worked to re-establish them in the city, compelling respect for family amongst other Acholi men in Lusozi and using his phone to request and follow his mother’s advice.

Overall, ethnographic examples in this section highlight the ambivalence of the impact of ‘dotcom’ on respect for older people and their knowledge, complicating the pervasive discourse that ageing experiences are on a one-way trajectory of decline. The section that follows further illustrates an understanding of Acholi ideals and identities as they are explicitly or ‘consciously’ (Allen, 1988, pp. 48–49) re-established in the city. In particular, this focuses on a research participant who is widely considered to be the key authority on Acholi matters in Lusozi, who I would often be referred to by others. He has the pseudonym ‘Ladit’, which is the name of the respected elders responsible for resolving disputes and representing the village (Girling, 1960: 75), much as Ladit does in Lusozi today. Ladit offers an established perspective on Acholi tradition, whilst also bringing ideals of ageing in the dotcom era to life.

**Ladit (Elder)**

Ojok believes that Ladit is the person responsible for “maintaining our culture, keeping it alive in town...he knows a lot a lot a lot a lot about Acholi tradition”. Ladit has lived in Lusozi for 27 years since fleeing his home in Kitgum during the war. As shown throughout this monograph, he helped to facilitate my learning, regularly welcoming me at the dance group’s practice, hosting
me in his home, telling stories to myself and Amor. He even allowed us to join as a member of his savings group Ribe Aye Teko (Unity is Strength), discussed in chapter 4. He viewed the time he gave us as fulfilling his role as an elder, to educate the younger generation about Acholi tradition. Throughout our first meeting cited here, Ladit outlined his perspective on problems in the Lusozi community and Uganda more broadly, which he believes are a result of the loss of traditional values and practices, and which he believes the government should reinstate. He finds that people are becoming more individualised, and less communal, which is causing problems;

‘In our time, we loved people and a problem affecting individuals would be handled communally unlike today...Tradition brings people together, we would handle situation communally including children’s upbringing’

He described how, in the past, people would congregate around the fireplace every evening for ‘wang oo’, ‘the place young ones would receive teachings for life’. As seen in Girling’s 1960 ethnography of Acholi social institutions, ‘wang-oo’ fireplace was an evening meal where people sat amongst their gender and age groups (Girling, 1960, p. 75). Young girls would be taught by older women, and boys by the men. ‘Children would grow knowing what is expected of them’. Now, him and many other Acholi elders in Lusozi lament the lack of available time or space to commit to ‘wang-oo’ meetings.

Ladit feels that elders are no longer respected, which he partly attributes to their behaviour in public, such as drunkenness or causing land disputes. ‘They are not trustworthy’. He finds that many young people come to him for advice due to his good conduct in public, for example asking about family life and marriage, but he finds that often his suggestions are not implemented. He thinks the younger dotcom generation increasingly respect material possessions over age. We would often find him at home watching music videos, nature documentaries, premier league football, Nigerian soaps or chatting on WhatsApp on his phone. He believes that information communication technologies (ICTs) such as television, phones and social media have ‘brought the world together on a positive note’, with better entertainment and faster communication, but that it has also ‘created more problems’ for elders:

‘Today, we are copying everything from the western world, and you know things you are not used to, you never handle it well... Children are exposed to funny funny information on television with all weird characters and we cannot control it. These have led to high moral decay in the African society. You know, life that you only copy is very dreadful,'
that is why our children get spoiled. Africans should remain Africans, we are over-copying the western world and to the expense of our very beautiful peaceful traditional communal life.’

As shown here from Ladit’s perspective, values of respect and conviviality may rhetorically be associated with the ‘beautiful peaceful’ past whilst they are also actively lived and made meaningful. According to Ladit’s interpretation, shared by many other participants in Lusozi, individualistic and materialistic western values are broadcast and appropriated by the dotcom generation, to the detriment of respect for elders and their knowledge. To Ladit, ‘over-copying’ is evident in infidelity and sexual promiscuity, widespread alcohol abuse, the growth of the evangelical Church, and the imposition of child rights and initiatives for women’s empowerment. The latter in part venerate men’s authority over women and children, and in part rejects the universalistic assumptions implicit in Euro-centric ‘rights’ discourses and initiatives, which overlook situated priorities of respect and relatedness (Tamale, 2020, p. 190), discussed further in chapter 7 on cooperative morality.

Ladit discussed increasing land disputes as evidence of declining cooperation. He feels that the formal legal approaches to customary land disputes are ‘ok, but the judgements in most cases lack wisdom’. Ladit explained how elders used to act as an effective law-making council within the community; they would decide an approach, prioritising communal good, and it would be respected and put in place, leading to social harmony. Ugandan lawyer and feminist scholar Sylvia Tamale agrees, finding Acholi community justice to place emphasis on good relations, social cohesion and balance (Tamale, 2020, p. 160). Hopwood and Porter have similarly described the priority given to maintaining harmonious and ‘customarily appropriate social relations’ over justice by legal process (Hopwood, 2015, p. 397; Porter, 2019). There has been extensive scholarly discussion regarding customary Acholi justice mechanisms as a way of dealing with LRA returnees and reconstructing the community following the war, to “promote healing in a culturally sensitive way” (Whyte et al., 2016, p. 46). In particular, efforts were made to formalise restitutive ceremonies called mato oprut or ‘drinking the bitter herb’, to conclude quarrels, and nyuono tong gweno or ‘stepping on an egg’, to welcome back those who have been away from home for a long time (Hovil, L. and Quinn, J.R., 2005, p. 24). I happened upon both of these ceremonies during visits to Amor’s home village, evidence that these are habitual and everyday occasions, called upon when needed. The implementation of these ceremonies after the war has been criticised as an instrumentalization of practices otherwise diverse and fluid, mirroring earlier colonial efforts to incorporate customs into the indirect administration of
British protectorate through governmentappointed Acholi chiefs or ‘Rwodi moo’ (Allen, 2007). This supports a grounded approach to the articulation and practice of ideals, observing them as they emerge through habitual action rather than reifying or taking them out of context. As Finnstrom put it in his ethnography of wartime in northern Uganda:

“It is important to note that drinking the bitter root (mato oput) is not simply a tradition of some glorious past…These practices, far from being dislocated in a past that no longer exists, have always continued to be situated socially. They are called upon and performed to address present concerns…with time they shift in meaning and appearance”.

(Finnstrom, 2008: 297-99)

Ladit in particular seeks to show how traditional values and practices can be flexibly adapted to life in the city, despite intensifying encounters with the world through the internet, mobile phones and social media. He sees it as his responsibility to educate the younger generation about their ‘beautiful peaceful tradition’ of respect and togetherness, and of storytelling through music and dance, re-contextualized in the city. At 67 years old, Ladit hopes his children grow old like him so they can see what he sees and pass on knowledge of how things are done. In figure 2.1 below, he introduces a cultural group he set up to share the knowledge he gained from his ancestors with the children born in Kampala. The group perform music and dances at various events and practice outside his home every Sunday evening. The film shows the group practicing in Lusuzi, the young men playing various instruments such as an arched harp called ‘adungu’, wooden drums or ‘engoma’ of varying size, skinhide forged with rope and pins. The young women between the ages of 13 and 30 dance, with graceful and rhythmic movements, praise and ululation. As p’Bitek puts it, Acholi dance expresses meanings attributed to social life and the world, as they are lived and celebrated here and now (ibid, p. 22). Ladit says in the film that ‘each Acholi dance has a purposes’, and he has outlined in the appendix traditional Acholi dances: for example, the ‘bwola’ dance performed at functions or for Acholi traditional chiefs, which p’Bitek describes as ‘the most formal and controlled’ of Acholi dances (1986: 37); ‘larakaraka’ the courtship dance, the ‘apitti’ dance for married women and the ‘dingi dingi’ for young women. Ladit also explains in the film that ‘each Acholi song has a message for people to connect to’. The lyrics tell the story of a particular person, containing a message or lesson regarding life events such as marriage, war, family. Whilst spending time in Amor’s home village, the women sang many songs and danced in the evening, and each one had a different moral and meaning, such as; a song of praise for the village, a song celebrating brave decision making by a youth who had followed advice from their elders, a grandmother’s love story about a couple who stayed
together despite having little money and became rich. Dance and music are therefore particularly instrumental in the process of education and remembrance. As another Acholi elder and senior member of Ribe Aye Teko described it,

Ours, people explain to you why people dance, ours it’s like the way of recording an event. It is like our book. It’s a way of writing our things. So in that dance, there is a meaning to that thing. Instead of going to write down, you just sing about it, and it remains in your head. So that was the meaning of it. It is a recording of an event. And the meaning of what they’re saying is there in that time.

The most popular songs have circulated across villages in northern Uganda and are remembered up to today, telling ‘stories of the past in the present’.

Figure 2.1: “We elders have a duty”. Available at: https://youtu.be/WreFu9eaJUg

The group also perform music and dance from across the country, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the area and group members. At intervals during the Sunday practice, the men playing the music would re-locate their instruments or change formation, joined by an ‘endere’ (flute) or ‘ensasi’ (marakas), depending on the Ugandan tradition the song came from. Some of the other Acholi elders in Lusozi criticize the ‘modernity’ of Ladit’s group, which includes music from all over the country, and does not obligate the dancers to wear traditional Acholi dress; as one 58-year-old Acholi elder said, “it’s coated in some plastic”, in contrast with other groups or dancers in the village who maintain a more ‘real’ or ‘pure’ tradition. But as shown in figure 2.1 above and in the photograph in figure 2.2 below, Ladit’s traditional teachings are clearly relevant, popular and productive for the young people involved. This includes the young male musicians and female dancers, some of whom have travelled for performances and paid their school fees thanks to money earned through the group. It also includes the children from the neighbourhood who come and watch them practice every Sunday evening, attempting to mimic the moves, and occasionally facing Ladit’s discipline. As an older Acholi woman who lives in Lusozi observed, “they train them…they like it so much…we did not drop it [tradition] down, even though it’s mixed up here”. 
Whilst allowing for social mobility within the urban context and beyond, participation in the group engenders an ‘embodied attachment to regional identity’ (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 209). Music and dance can therefore express social significance beyond ritual or enjoyment, framing both individual identity and group belonging across generations (ibid, p. 207), whilst accommodating the ‘conviviality’ of diverse urban neighbourhoods like Lusozi; the everyday ways people invoke, celebrate and preserve difference in diverse, multi-ethnic urban settings (Gilroy, 2009), in ‘dynamically adapting to the challenging contemporary context’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017, pp. 261–2), promoting the mutuality of the continuous and the new.

Conclusion

Ladit’s storytelling expresses a sense of loss of the ideals he grew up with; respect for elders, the passing of knowledge between generations, collaboration and togetherness. Like others, he showed how respect is given to elders who have earned it, by respecting themselves and others, as evident through their personal conduct. Respect is shown to them through greeting, a calm manner and tone of voice, and through seeking their advice. Ladit notes a decline in elder respect and respectability, believing it to contribute to the ‘moral degradation’ of their society and the younger generation growing up within it (Kyaddondo, D., 2008). With declining respect and togetherness comes worsening experiences of ageing, disrupted hierarchies of age and
intergenerational care practices. This worsening experience is often conceptualised in relation to a shifting context of epidemics, urbanisation, population growth, and ‘dotcom’. It therefore particularly applies to the city, being ‘mixed up’, overcrowded, economically challenging, materialistic and youth centric.

Ladit’s concerns are widely shared amongst elders in the community, health practitioners, policy makers and advocates, and researchers of ageing in Uganda and in Sub-Saharan Africa more broadly (Aboderin, 2004; Maharaj, 2020; Maniragaba et al., 2019; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Nzabona et al., 2016; Oppong, 2006; Susan Whyte, 2017; van der Geest, 1997). The debate around the Presidential age limit and the ‘youth revolution’ exemplifies, reflects and reinforces related intergenerational tensions. Whilst a chronological understanding of ‘oldness’ is too fixed in relation to dynamic personal and social determinants of age (Freeman and Coast, 2014, p. 1138; Hoffman and Pype, 2016, p. 4; Kyaddondo, D., 2008, p. 27), categories of age such as ‘elder’ and ‘youth’ are evidently socially and politically significant, invoked to elicit ideas of power and dissent (Durham, 2000).

In educating the younger generation, Ladit works to maintain the role of elder in the city. Like others, he seeks to uphold respect and respectability, regardless of the wider trends he observes. Ojok similarly explains how he enforces respect for the family amongst his peers, and also how he seeks and respects advice from his mother at home via phone calls. Kilongeni and Ssebowa also describe how they feel respected by their children and other younger people in the community, despite noting a trend of declining respect more generally. Younger people would similarly differentiate themselves from others they find to be disrespectful of their elders. Rather than being fixed in an ‘idealised past’ (Livingston, 2003; Porter, 2019), values of respect and relatedness are actively adapted for contemporary relevance and circulated to ‘keep them alive in town’, (re)generating meanings for both young and old people (Finnström, 2008; Pype, 2017). The ‘aliveness’ is exemplified by traditional dance practices, ‘culture’ as it is productively lived in the here and now (p’Bitek, 1986). Dance and music offers attachment to regional identity amongst younger people in the city, as well as their individual social mobility and “urban personhood” (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 207). This ethnography therefore depicts the on-going fluidity of social ideals or customs, adapted to the dotcom era, and to which dotcom is adapted to (Bruijn, 2009; Horst and Miller, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 40). In doing so, this contributes to critiques of the colonial reification of customs, to which fixity was imposed to serve a language of authority and administration, sustaining inequities (Finnström, 2008, p. 82; Mamdani, M., 1996; Nyanzi, 2013; p’Bitek, 1986; Tamale, 2020; Allen, 2007; Mbembe, 2002).
The colonial domination and erasure of history paints a universalised picture of hetero-patriarchal coherence and order (Smith, 2012, pp. 30–31). In contrast, this ethnographic evidence therefore disrupts a chronological enlightenment understanding of historical progress or ‘development’, favouring instead a messier and ever-evolving process based on interconnections (Nyamnjoh, 2017) and ‘intersubjectivity between the one and the many’ (Jackson, 1998b, p. 5). As Nyamnjoh shows, such interconnectedness is particularly relevant in ‘mixed up’ urban contexts in Africa that “represent histories of mobility, cultural encounters, negotiation and flux” (Nyamnjoh, 2017, cf Kopytoff, 1987: 3-17). Conviviality, which preserves the possibilities implicit in interconnection through uncertainty, locates a ‘middle ground’ between ‘tradition and modernity’, promoting the “concessional mutuality” of continuity and change (Nyamnjoh, 2017). As shown in this chapter, present experiences of ageing are understood through shared ideals, which themselves are collaborative and in flux, adapted to the city in its diversity. Through this process, ‘dotcom’ is domesticated within existing ideals, which themselves adapt to accommodate ‘dotcom’. Whilst being a primary tool of dotcom, the mobile phone is actually shown to accommodate this respect. Parents are able to share advice for their children to heed despite distances. Finally, as will be expanded later, children are able to provide for their parents at home thanks to mobile money remittances, thereby up-holding expectations of elder care.
Appendix

Ladit’s Response

In response to reading this chapter, Ladit shared the following written observations about Acholi dance that he wanted me to include. Kilongeni worked with him to translate them into English.

Acholi music acts as a library of books for recording events like love stories, wars, mourning lost relatives, and disasters like ‘bonyo’, when the locusts invaded and destroyed all the crops in Acholi sub-region (in the early 19th Century, almost 100 years prior to the locust invasion in the region at the time of writing in early 2020). The songs about the HIV-AIDS pandemic, the ‘lukeme’/’adungu’ songs, are played even in Christian churches found in Acholiland. These songs are meaningful, unlike today, when they copy the western style of hip hop, R&B, dancehall etc for the dotcom era.

At the end of harvest every year, the Acholi’s relax their body and mind with a number of dances like ‘Dingi Dingi’, which is performed by young girls below 18 years. They are extremely speedy and hard to perfect, even at that age bracket. Typical instruments are played by talented men, including the calabash ‘awal’, drums ‘vul’ and flute ‘olere’. This dance is to prepare the young girls for marriage when they clock 18 years and above.

The arakaraka dance is the most popular, enjoyed by people of almost all age group but is meant to be for courtship; if your daughter or son dances for more than two years without getting married, then they must be the ugliest girl or boy in the community or just unlucky and should now settle for an already married man or formerly married woman. Costumes are similar to Dingi Dingi.

Courtship for marriage was then done in a very decent manner, by identifying a girl at dances, on market days and any other organised events. The boy arranges a visit to the girl’s home to propose, the process usually takes a period of about one to two years, during which time they can learn background of each other with the full knowledge and advice and guidance of both parents. This can divorce, unlike today where people date on Facebook, WhatsApp, and via phone call. The process can now be as short as one day, a period too short to know each other’s status and family background. Premature co-habiting is leading to so many divorces, and deaths related to HIV/AIDS.
Other dances include:

- Apitti dance (myel apitti); this is only for married women, done with very respectable dress ‘mirinda’ well folded African ‘kitenge’ to show their happiness in marriage, good harvest, childbearing and upbringing or even the number of domestic animals in their family.

- Bwola dance (myel bwola); a royal dance performed to the Acholi traditional chiefs either during harvest, at a traditional function or by school going children to enable them to learn and do it when they grow up in the future. Acholi dances are meant to be original without modification, bare foot, bare chest with nothing to hide, just to show people you are the best and fit. In comparison therefore, it is almost impossible to mix the traditional dance with the dotcom dance of these days.

This is a factor that brings people together, the Acholi traditional dances and songs. I am not being too proud of it, but I say Acholi have the richest culture in the world like ‘bwola’, ‘Lara karaka’, ‘Dingi Dingi’, ‘apitti’ to mention a few. It also acts as a way to express happiness, emotions, releasing stress, recording events in good or bad times.

In conclusion therefore, the world has changed Acholi ways of life drastically. Because of this, the Dotcom generation now respect any person with money better than their elders. Even the poor ageing elders have a fear of correcting their children because they can withhold financial assistance from them. These factors from within and other outside factors like western culture has greatly affected our life.
Chapter 3

Age and Work

This chapter draws from discussions and observations about older research participants’ everyday working routines. This ethnographic focus aligns with earlier anthropological studies conducted in Uganda showing the pragmatic and relational mitigation of economic uncertainty (Finnström, 2008; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996; Whyte, 1997). The chapter demonstrates that work is not necessarily distinct from socializing or domestic life, and businesses are in fact often dependent on both. Throughout the chapter, the narrative shifts between discussions of various activities, to emphasise interconnections between people’s livelihoods. This depicts the everyday ‘social texture within which the informal economy operates’ (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 2), the (gendered) relationships within households and across the community that it depends on. There is a particular focus on the experiences of older women, who continue to work and provide for their families in later life, contrary to stereotypes of ageing and work in the city, which were earlier critiqued by Ugandan anthropologist and activist Stella Nyanzi in her work with older widows in Kampala (Nyanzi, 2009).

This ‘holistic, small-scale perspective’ (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 2) on self- and mutual support through work (ibid, 10) also needs to be understood within the wider political economy, which relies heavily on informal networks and particularly the labour of women, as participants themselves often expressly indicate and reflect upon. This aims to show how people live with and understand the “assault” of liberal capitalism on cooperative moralities in low-income urban communities (Nakirya and State, 2013, p. 34; Tamale, 2020, p. 231), on which it also depends. Potentially therefore the ethnography also locates a “springboard for counter-narratives” for addressing inequities (Tamale, 2020, p. 233) and specific recommendations are outlined for the social protection of older people who continue to work in later life (Nyanzi, 2009).

Whilst markets have increased in many countries around the world, including Uganda, this has not always led to an increase in salaried employment. This “jobless growth” (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen, 2018, p. 12) excludes many people from involvement in circulations of global capital, disrupts the relationship between people and the state, gives rise to new forms of precarity and reliance on distributive claims (Ferguson, 2015), and significantly here, also relies on unpaid labour. This can include domestic work, assistance from relatives or live-in maids, and (self) care practices; as Muehlebach shows in her work on voluntarism and care work amidst increasing
neoliberal privatisation of welfare (2013), this context elicits particular personal, ‘affective burdens’ (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen, 2018, p. 12). This sense of burden of (self) care responsibilities will be introduced here and further discussed in chapter 6 on health and care. This depicts how work as a lived experience of the political economy ties up moral, affective and political factors, which are differentially experienced and managed in different historical contexts. This global perspective is a pertinent reminder that the everyday socioeconomic practices of older people in Lusozi do not represent a differentiated experience, but a shared urban reality of industrial capitalism, ‘global austerity, diminishing public welfare and fragmented employment’ (Hart, 1985; Ferguson, 2006; Thieme, 2018). Ethnographies of work around the world highlight both the “systemic force of capital, and the historical specificity of how these ever-shifting capital relations play out in practice across the world” (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen, 2018) - ways of seeking livelihoods, which are intrinsically tied up with family life. This ordinary, pragmatic mitigation of everyday uncertainties is therefore a shared reality across locations and generations, at once a global and specific experience.

**Work in the City**

Long-standing categories of age in an ‘industrialised world’ assign certain activities of economic production to particular life stages (Honwana, 2012, p. 12): education and childhood, a time of dependence; work and adulthood, a time of independence; and retirement and rest in old age, which in Uganda, is said to be ideally a time of interdependence (Whyte, 2017). This chapter will complicate this linear conception of ageing and work, which is disrupted both by socially negotiated categories of age as outlined in the previous chapter, and the wider economy. The ways demographic and socio-economic shifts are disrupting expectations for older people’s everyday lives are manifest in various ways around the world; for example, as evident in other ASSA fieldsites, activities associated with old age are being redefined, for example, in Ireland, with reduced family obligations and increased capacity to take up independent hobbies (Garvey and Miller, 2021). Many of the researchers on the team observed how global and urban migration is “scattering” families (Coe, 2014) who then increasingly rely on smartphones to remain connected (Otaegui in Chile; Walton in Italy; Haapio-Kirk in Japan, forthcoming). The same is true in Lusozi, where many older people moved to work, and now almost universally aspire to move home to their region of origin, once school fees are paid and enough money saved.

As with the youth-focus of work and technology, Kampala itself is commonly considered to be ‘a youthful place’. As noted by Nyanzi (2009), the capital city is stereotyped as a place for younger, able-bodied people who can hustle and innovate in competition for limited resources. For the majority of research participants, Kampala is not seen as a home but as a place to work
and for children to get an education, whilst the village is a place for retiring, to spend time with family and live off the land. This could relate to what Mamdani terms the “bifurcated state” between the rural and urban (Mamdani, M., 1996, p. xiv), an intentional segregation of the market and the population for the purposes of indirect and direct colonial rule. Through the lived experiences and aspirations in Lusozi today, certain geographies are assigned to certain temporalities, informing an age-based migration from the village to the city and back again. As Ladit explained:

“I am aging and so I have very little to do here in town now. I want to go back home… I am gathering some resources now and I will soon go back home. I will not stay here forever especially when it’s safe now to go home. But the young people can still remain here because they are still able to do some work here - not me anymore. I have to go back home… In the real context of life, Godown can never be seen as a home. Yes, I have my children here and my own family, but I never see Godown as a home in any way. A home is combination of things including having extended families and cultural practices around you.”

As well as the preference to leave behind the fast-paced, crowded and economic demands of life in Kampala, there is a social expectation for people to return to their regional home in old age. As a Catechist in Lusozi put it, the “time will come when we have to go to our Indigenous home, we have to settle”, or as the local football coach puts it, “it’s where I belong”. Ideally, a home and garden will be prepared, and money saved for farming and healthcare. As Nyanzi states: “dignity demands a retreat (with pension in hand) to a comfortable home tucked away in some remote rural district” (2009). Yet old age pensions are mostly only accessible for retired government employees on formal contracts or long-term private-sector employees with savings in National Social Security Fund (NSSF). According to UN statistics, 7% of people over the age of the statutory retirement age of 55 in Uganda are enrolled in a registered pension scheme. The few participants in this research who are already retired and receiving a monthly pension are those who previously worked in government jobs, as police, health workers or civil servants. Competition for these posts is high, as reflected in national statistics, although it’s worth first noting that the standards for calculating unemployment and underemployment from labour force surveys are found to be ill-fitting in African contexts (Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge, 2020; Linsi and Mügge, 2019). The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) National Labour Force Survey 2016/17 found that amongst those of ‘working age’, 14-64, unemployment rates or the proportion of those actively looking for a job is at 10%, whilst underemployment is at 35%,
disproportionately affecting women\textsuperscript{xiii}. With 75% of the population under the age of 30, there are not enough jobs for the younger generation in particular\textsuperscript{xiv}, which also contributes to the intergenerational tensions introduced in the previous chapter. This means that retirement can be unattainable without financial support from others, with many people continuing to work into old age.

Except for ‘Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment’ (SAGE), state provisions are limited for those without pensions or savings. SAGE is a senior citizen’s grant awarded to those over 65, providing 25,000 UGX (£5) on a monthly basis. In 2018, at the time of the research, it was being rolled out to the 15 ‘most vulnerable’ districts in the country, including much of northern Uganda. The President then announced that it would be expanded across the country, including Kampala. The Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA), an NGO for older persons, monitored the implementation of SAGE and found it to be ‘miraculously’ successful in preventing extreme poverty in old age\textsuperscript{xlv}, although amongst some older people encountered in northern Uganda, the requirement to travel to a centre to collect the grant, as well as the need for a national security ID card, could hinder access. Additional assistance from NGOs, often international or faith-based organisations, is mostly scattered and short-term, as seen in Lusozi. Nyanzi has previously recommended that these smaller-scale interventions, such as community outreach and vocational training, are deployed at national scale, and with input from the elderly themselves (Nyanzi, 2009).

Since the 1970s, what is widely known as the ‘informal sector’ has been a major source of income in the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Hart, 1973, 1985; Thieme, 2018). ‘Informality’ refers to a range of activities unregistered by the state, including household and communal livelihoods (Wallman, 1996). However, it is important to avoid a dualistic distinction between sectors of employment. As unregistered and largely untaxed economic activities, ‘informal’ work can often be characterised as ‘deviant’ or exceptional (Ferguson, 2015, p. 14, 2006, p. 15), despite the fact that it is intrinsic to the economic system (Wallman and Baker, 1996, p. 672), which has long depended on it. As economic anthropologist Keith Hart notes, the informal includes the ‘negation of the form’, such as crime or tax evasion, as well as ‘variable or unspecified content of the form’, such as the completion of established consumer chains via street vending (Hart, 1985, p. 57). This chapter will focus on the latter, demonstrating instances in which ‘informal’ businesses are intertwined with, and supporting of, the official economy.
The ‘informal sector’ makes up the majority of the economy in Uganda, suggesting that it is the ‘real’ yet unofficial economy (Thieme, 2018). The National Labour Force Survey 2016/17\(^{ix}\) found that 41% of the working population work in subsistence agriculture, but of those who don’t, 85% work in the informal sector, which generates over half of national GDP. This contributes to Uganda being ranked the third highest nation in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in 2014, with 28% of adults owning their own businesses\(^{x}\). It also means that Uganda has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the region, at 12.6%\(^{xi}\).

78% of people living in Kampala, and the majority of participants in Lusozi Godown, are self-employed within this heterogenous ‘informal sector’. According to the UBOS ‘Informal Sector Survey’\(^{xii}\), and as commonly seen in Lusozi, this includes a range of businesses, largely based on trade, such as hawking, vending and taxi driving, hotels and restaurants, and manufacturing, including metalwork, tailoring, charcoal distribution and alcohol brewing (Bibangambah, 1992). The diversity of everyday activities, working routines and access to social protection was often reflected on by interviewees; as a 56-year-old market vendor put it, “in our community here, we’re all living different lives”. The informal businesses in Kampala cluster in low-income residential areas like Lusozi, where they are often household based, with proximity to customers and markets (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 10). In their 1996 study of ‘Kampala women getting by’, anthropologists Sandra Wallman and Grace Bantebya-Kyomuhendo have also noted that the informal economy provides opportunities for women in particular (ibid). 65% of informal businesses in Uganda are started with personal savings, 19% with outside contributions, 7% with loans from family, friends or Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs)\(^{xiii}\). Like those introduced here and many others, people risk capital to set up their own business. Only 2% of informal employees have written contracts\(^{i}\), reflecting a shortfall of protection policies such as holiday, sick leave and pension schemes. This can mean that healthcare requirements pose a threat to income, a particular consideration as people age, and as physical health declines.

Informal employment in Uganda is primarily a source of livelihood for the urban poor; the median income of formally employed people has been found to be twice as much as those informally employed, and recent World Bank calculations suggest that 93% of informal firm owners in Kampala are below the international poverty line of $1.90 income per day\(^{x}\). They have thus concluded that informal work is not a form of tax evasion, as incomes are below the national tax bracket of UGX 10,000,000 (£2,135). Furthermore, studies conducted in street markets in Kampala, considered ‘hubs’ of the informal economy (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012,
p. 267), find that they represent a ‘hybrid’ economy, with formalization through ground rents and also through the required registration of mobile phones – which are found to be invaluable for communicating with clients and suppliers, and managing payments via mobile money (Larsson and Svensson, 2018). This challenges the political homogenisation of the informal sector and the strategic employment of certain policies of (de)regulation. For example, in Kampala, central government sporadically supports the resistance of informal economic groups to formal city regulation as a way of gaining votes before an election (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012). As well as strategically supporting de-regulation, the opposite is also true. At the time of fieldwork, roadside vending was sometimes subject to punitive measures, including imprisonment and fines. The older women hawking fruits, for example, could face the night in jail, and the loss of their investment and earnings. As shown below, others in the community would often condemn this criminalisation as evidence of an unjust government willing to worsen already challenging circumstances, figureheads of a system which fails to provide formal economic opportunities and to protect those required to make a living outside of them.

Gambling

This sense of political neglect was the concern of ‘Parliament’ in Lusozi, a group of men between the ages of 30 and 60 who congregate on plastic chairs in a sheltered area by the main road. They think theirs is better than the real parliament of Uganda, because they consider the “common man”: “they say we’re ok. But we’re not ok”. From their vantage point, they watch people in the busy Lusozi community going about their daily business; the many boda bodas (motorbike taxis), people walking to get the nearest matatu (bus) to work, hawkers carrying fruit and materials to sell, men preparing chapattis and food for passers-by, children in school uniforms. Trade takes place on the street opposite, in the restaurants and open doorways of tailors, cobblers, carpenters, barbers, butchers, charcoal sellers, mobile vendors and general retailers. Women can be seen near their homes washing clothes, cooking, looking after children (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 73). As we sat in Parliament one afternoon amidst the daily buzz of traffic, radios, music and laughter, they pointed out a man carrying a sack of plastic bottles. He collects six kilos of ‘wasted bottles’ every day, for which he’s paid 400ugx (£0.10) per kilo. He used to be a professional soldier for Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF). Now, “if he fails to get something to eat, he comes to the community…see everyone here how they struggle...This is a national problem”. Kato is elected Chairman of Parliament in Lusozi. He was formerly a qualified technician, a self-employed civil engineer. At 40, he injured his wrist and was
forced to quit. Now, at 61, he continues to work as a property broker, waiting for commissions to arrange the sale of plots of land. “It’s chance, not constant money…a gambling business”. Most of the men in Parliament, including a retired soldier, a driver and a pastor, do the same work. They use their phones to communicate with other agents around Uganda, for example if someone is looking for land in Entebbe, and they get commission from there. But “jobs are rare…you can spend a week or even 2 months without a customer. Then you can get 5 million shillings when they buy a house”.

In Parliament, “we combine knowledge and see how we can survive…someone brings an idea here and we study it”. People come to discuss their business plans. Others come and say “I’m looking for work, we try to connect them”. In the past, they had an office, but the cost of rent and tax was “too much”. It is technically illegal for them to sit and work in this area as none of them are paying taxes, so sometimes they get arrested, “we’re gambling now”. Kato feels the government should “put houses for us” like he’s heard they do in the UK. “Everything we buy is taxed, sugar, airtime, even mobile money, even water. But they don’t see it. They get a lot of money but they can’t assist the people, that’s the problem here. It’s just for the people at the top. We need to leave the city completely. We’ll go to the village and get there. 2 cows 1 goat…I produced 6 kids, they need to study, will they survive on that cow? I need to gamble”. To Kato, the financial situation faced by the members of Parliament reflects a lack of national social investment. This depicts a common rejection of neoliberal economic policies and wealth disparities, viewing a lack of social investment as immoral and extractive, and attacking the selfishness of the political elite (Ferguson, 2006, p. 77). Lusozi’s parliament shows how ‘anti-social’ policies are mitigated through ‘pro-social’ mutual support within their network (ibid). At the same time, whilst waiting for scarce jobs, they observe the way others make their living in Lusozi, their hard work, and sometimes their need to rely on others in the community. “In Uganda, it’s not what you know, it’s who you know”.

Sometimes whilst they’re waiting, they gossip, talk football and play games. Often groups of men are seen outside homes and bars in Lusozi watching sports and playing games like Ludo, drafts and pool throughout the day. I was told that originally, games were played to pass the time, but now people tend to pay between 500 UGX and 5000 UGX (£0.10 and £1) “to make it more interesting”. Games are also thought to relieve stress, to create friendships with people, to offer the potential of small monetary gain, as well as the social benefits of generating friendships, relaxing with others, ‘taking soda or beer’, and even potentially getting contacts of people who come to play, “some of them have good jobs”. Ludo is strategic, competitive, serendipitous,
tense – like life and business - and can draw small crowds to watch over the hunched players whilst the dice rattle and hit the board. Mathematical games like draughts are played “to keep your brain at its best”. Occasionally the boards are replaced with smartphone apps. This is not just about having fun; games are an opportunity to engage with other aspects of life, work and money, interaction with people. With work often compared to “gambling”, the distinction between work and play is further blurred, with the ‘open-endedness of work and productivity of play’ (Malaby, 2009, p. 206), both requiring a disposition “characterized by a readiness to improvise in the face of an ever-changing world” (ibid).

Gambling is also a common activity in Lusozi, as became evident during studies of phone use. Five people of 30 interviewed about the apps on their smartphone had sports betting apps. And during a survey of 170 people as they came to a specific mobile money vendor over the course of three days, Amor asked who they were sending or receiving mobile money from and for what purpose; 28 of the exchanges, 16%, were for coin gambling or sports betting. Two of the respondents explained that they are without work, so instead depend on betting for an income. Whilst conducting this study, Amor was shocked to see men losing their children’s school fees or lunch money in one of the gambling halls in Lusozi. This reflects a general perception that gambling habits are immoral, socially unproductive and wasteful of family resources. At one point during the research, the police had come to remove all gambling and gaming machines in Lusozi. I spoke with a local leader at the time, who said he agrees with this movement, as it had become a problem, especially for young people, who would try their chances with money given to them for other household things.

In contrast, Obama thinks government banning of gambling and sports betting is short-sighted, failing to recognise that, just like running a business, it is a way of making money and “keeping minds growing”. Obama is 40 years old, and despite arriving in Lusozi recently in 2011, he is considered one of the most successful businessmen in the area, and he provides financial assistance for his family in Kampala and in his home village in Alur. Obama values his smartphone for the same reason that games are popular; it offers an opportunity to keep in contact with friends, and also build a social network, including with people abroad. He sees many business opportunities in WhatsApp in particular and is part of big WhatsApp groups “with people outside”, offering the potential to network and make money. His business success started when he opened a shop selling mobile money and beer in Lusozi, soon realising that mobile money was his most profitable product and focusing on that. He estimates that across his three shops now, he still has 500 to 600 customers a month.
As will be expanded in chapter 5 on phone use, and as explained in the film about mobile money in figure 3.1 below, many people use mobile money as a personal savings account, as it is accessible within their own neighbourhood, instead of going to the bank which requires identification and a minimum balance. It is possible to pay for various services using their phone, including electricity bills and school fees. When Obama first opened his shop, he was one of only two vendors in Lusozi, so “by then we were really making money, like 5 million UGX (£990) a month”. Business has changed since then, partly due to the many branches which have since opened, with 33 competitors providing mobile money services in the Lusozi Godown area alone, “we have a problem of copy and paste in business, so the customer is divided… It’s the cheapest business that people can set up for themselves.” Other mobile money vendors said they set up their business as they want to be self-employed, and it’s one of the most viable businesses available to them. At the time, business was also threatened by the introduction of a 1% levy on all mobile money transactions in May 2018, which prompted an outcry sufficient to ensure its reduction to 0.5% in November 2018. Many interviewees in different jobs, particularly those working in the market, also complained that business has declined in recent years, and that they find there’s increasing competition, higher prices and fewer customers. However, there is evidently still demand for their services despite competition, with 10 vendors having an overall average of 94 customers per day. Some mobile money vendors in Lusozi, like the mobile money agent seen in the short film below in figure 3.1, emphasized the importance of friendliness and good relationships with customers in order to ensure regular business despite this competition and taxation.
Mobile money also supports business-owners, facilitating payments to suppliers and from customers. A study conducted in Kampala market found that mobile phones are used extensively, to pay for services, bills, taxes, rents and supplies conveniently and safely (Larsson and Svensson, 2018). With the registration of SIM cards and mobile money transactions, the researchers argue that this is contributing to ‘hybridized formal/informal markets’ (ibid, p. 537), again reflecting the complex interrelationships between sectors. With the invaluable ease of communication and transactions, one of the market women participating in the research said, “we do not know a life without mobile phones” (Larsson and Svensson, 2018, p. 543). Similar statements were made by participants in this research, as expanded in chapter 5 on phone use. In the following section, various working routines are described concurrently: that of a market vendor, a hawker and a boda driver. This emphasises the inter-reliance between businesses, mutual observations within the Lusozi community, and the sociality of work.

The Market

The conversation with the men in Parliament depicts the everyday association made between economic scarcity and a neglectful government, characterised by extractive self-interest and ‘disregard for common good’ (Ferguson, 2006; Wiegratz, 2010). It also introduced the significance of social networks for seeking livelihood in this context. Like the mobile money
vendors encountered above, business owners in Lusozi often emphasise the importance of being social and chatty with people, so that customers enjoy coming back to buy from them. In order to get the best prices in the market, long-standing regular customers are needed to overcome increasing competition, and trust and friendship across the community is integral. Some shop-owners explained how they sometimes help customers by giving them items on credit, showing trust and flexibility to accommodate their neighbours’ financial constraints.

The men in Parliament also demonstrate the ways the community in Lusozi observe each other in this regard. Often, during conversations and interviews, people would reflect on the everyday life experiences and routines of others in Lusozi. These conversations would often similarly emphasise uncertainty, the need to ‘gamble’ and work hard, the shortages imposed by a removed and uncaring political elite, and the role of the community to support people in need. The older women who hawk fruits in town were the people most often subject to the concerns of others. They work over long hours and distances, with high risk and little reward, facing theft and punishment. As this woman, a local leader for women’s affairs, in her 40’s explained,

On the street you have seen many of them selling bananas...For men, sometimes you find it is not also easy for them. So that’s why you find women also suffering... You go in the morning to look for bananas, then from there you proceed to town...You go and sell your business and what you have got from there, you have to come back again, you see the family has not taken breakfast, lunch is still also in that basket you’re carrying...So by the time you reach home they tell you food is not there. Then that little money which somebody has come back with, you find she has to go and buy beans, posho...pay rent, school fees are also there. So it’s really very, very difficult and you find women are still suffering.

At the time, she was particularly concerned about Ayaa Palma, who had lost her son and daughter-in-law to a motorbike accident the year before and has since been left with the responsibility of her three granddaughters, now “total orphans”. She was particularly concerned about the risks she faced doing her work at her age:

This Jaja told me that now they want to chase her away from the house, she has no money, she lost all her children, she has nothing to eat... the kids have to go to school, and the girl is growing by the way...so those are the people we need also to recognise in the community mostly, more than any other person...and in fact we have been
supporting her, when I get little posho, I take it to her...can you imagine a woman of 65 moving with bananas in town? She was even one time knocked with a boda boda, at that age! You move around, city council disturbs her, they chase her, they arrest her...they take all her things.

During an earlier interview with Ayaa Palma herself, we found her cracking groundnuts on her front step to prepare dinner for her granddaughters. She explained to us how she had come to Kampala and started this job. When she was widowed 20 years ago, she moved in with her Uncle, in Kampala and started noticing people carrying produce on their heads. She thought she could do the same so began to sell bananas. Ayaa Palma had four sons but only one is still alive. It was her granddaughters’ parents who should now be taking care of them all, including herself, but now she has to do it all on her own, including paying their school fees. In return, the girls cook, wash and clean for her; whilst we sat on her step her 13-year-old granddaughter arrived with a jerrycan full of water from a nearby communal tap. When Ayaa Palma gets sick, it’s a serious problem for the household, but her neighbours take care of them, bringing them money, food and water. She pointed at the door adjacent to hers; ‘[t]hat lady has really taken care of me; God should bless her and give her everything she wants’. Sometimes, when she’s well again, she gives them food to thank them. She feels it is her job that has kept her healthy, as well as the fact that she’s stayed away from men. But she’s now 65 years old and has ‘moved for 30 years’, so she’s tired already. It is her aspiration now to have her own market stall where she can ‘sit in one place’.

Amor’s mother Adul feels fortunate to have a stall selling vegetables in Lusozi market. When she first arrived in Kampala in 1994, fleeing the rebel and government attacks in their home village in Palabek, she said she was ‘living in hardship’. Amor’s father Kilongeni was living in the house of his stepsister but was still searching for a job. Lusozi ‘was still bush’, with few houses and a lot of space in between. She said she was scared as she only spoke Acholi, and ‘feared the different characters from different places’, hardly leaving the home for the first two months. There was no money, and she wanted her kids to go to school. After a while, a friend introduced her to the market business, and she became the first person to sell greens which she sourced from the district market 1.5km away. Kilongeni got a job as a security guard but the pay was ‘very little’, covering only school fees and rent, whilst Adul’s earnings paid for food and other requirements. Occasionally, they ‘ended up in a bad condition’, and neighbours had to intervene, bringing food or paying medical fees. Now, Adul prefers living in Lusozi as she can support herself. Her oldest kids are well educated, and at the time of the research all had paid jobs, which allowed them to
support their parents in buying their home in the neighbourhood, as well as other properties next door which they rent out. Once she’s finished paying school fees (the youngest two boys, Smiley and Chol, are still studying in college), and when the house is built in the village, she will go home.

In the meantime, as she explains in the film below, she works from 5am to 9pm every day, ‘Monday to Monday’, even on Christmas Day. She goes to the district market first thing by boda to buy her greens (bor, malakwan), silverfish (lakede) and okra (otigo), spending UGX 180,000 (£38.75). She can then make up to UGX 100,000 (£21.50) profit on a good day, but from that needs to pay for the ground rental of the stall to Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA), which costs UGX 15,000 (£3.25) per month, as well as everyday costs of running the home including charcoal, water and food. This taxation again emphasises the ‘hybridity’ of formal and informal activities, with the market as a ‘hub’ or ‘microcosm’ of the ‘real informal’ economy (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012, p. 267; Larsson and Svensson, 2018, p. 538).

If the market is the ‘hub’ of the economy, boda bodas are the spokes, being crucial to the city’s transport infrastructure, to family livelihoods like Adul’s and to the drivers themselves. The boda industry is said to generate livelihood for 7% of the population, with an estimated 50 to 300,000 drivers in Kampala (Doherty, 2020, p. 1). Bodas are fundamental to the transport infrastructure,
facilitating ‘everyday mobilities’ across the city which are embedded ‘within the broader power relations of the political economy’ (Porter et al., 2017, p. 7). Boda drivers occupy an important political role, with collective power to ‘protect livelihoods’ and resist attempts at regulation or taxation of the industry, strategically leveraged for Presidential support (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012, p. 264). Boda bodas are also considered dangerous, with 7,000 deaths from accidents recorded over three years from 2014 to 2017 (Wanume, P. Nduhura, A. Mugerwa, B. Bagambe, H. Ninsiima, J., 2019), and with health workers in Lusozi hospital reporting the frequency of patients with boda-related injuries. This means they occupy a ‘complex moral position’ being ‘vital but pathologised’ (Doherty, 2020), also evident in the generational stereotype of ‘money hungry’ young men who sell family land to buy a boda (Whyte and Acio, 2017, p. 22).

Whilst exemplifying the ‘neoliberal moral economy’ – competition, transaction, uncertainty, risk – the boda industry is also embedded in relations, helping the drivers provide for their families, relying on relationships with customers, and solidarity between the drivers through a ‘stage system’ (Doherty, 2020, p. 3), a co-operative to establish trust and accountability and provide drivers with a community of support. New ride-hailing apps such as ‘safe boda’ are adopted within the ‘stage’ logics, establishing a trusted network, and demonstrating how digital platforms become ‘embedded in prior social infrastructure’ (ibid, p. 6) whilst also ‘re-shaping activities’, as with the use of mobile phones in the markets (Larsson and Svensson, 2018, p. 542).

In the short film shown below, Adul’s boda driver Samuel explains that he is in charge of defense at his stage in Lusozi Godown. Having worked there for 10 years, he feels he is ‘so social with people’ there, ensuring regular customers. He thinks having a stage is a good thing, because they become part of a community, recruit others to work with them and ‘build each other’. Adul’s whole family prefer to go with him as they know and trust him, and he would often also take me home. He has been a boda driver for 10 years, since saving for a motorbike from his previous bicycle delivery business. He works from 6am-9pm every day, starting by taking Adul to her market suppliers, taking only Sunday off when he goes to Church. As he explains in the film, he takes children to school, and transports food for hotels in town. He can take about 30 to 40 people each day, which makes him between UGX 30,000 to UGX 40,000 (£6.40 to £8.50) per day, or up to UGX 600,000 (£128) per month. He feels that he has to thank God as he rides a boda for a living, but God still protects him from all those cars. ‘Why wouldn’t I think Him?’, if he gets an extra UGX 1,000 (£2.10), he takes it to the Church as an offertory on a Sunday. He said he is ‘trying to solve the problem of school fees’. He has 3 kids, 2 living in the village in western Uganda with his wife, so he sends them money, a typical distributive arrangement with
people migrating for work and supporting family at home (Ferguson, 2015, p. 95). He is the only person providing for his family, and if he needs money in an emergency he can only turn to money lenders, who charge 10 to 20% interest. On Friday, his son was sick so he had to send mobile money for transport to the hospital (UGX 4,000 or £0.85 each way) and treatment. His 70-year-old mother also lives nearby, and his kids help their grandmother in their school holidays, fetching water and helping with other household chores, in line with what Cati Coe terms ‘existing kinship repertoires’ or ways of mobilising family resources for elder care that are ‘considered normal and natural’ (Coe, 2014, p. 5). The rest of the time, Samuel’s family at home have a live-in maid who they pay UGX 50,000 (£10.60) each month. This is an overlooked yet increasingly common household system in Uganda, as families distribute care responsibilities to adapt to economic change. This could be conceptualised as what Cati Coe terms an ‘age-inscription’, not yet a discursive norm of ageing or ‘repertoire’, but a patterned response to social change (Coe, C., 2020; Coe and Alber, 2018). In particular, paid carers accommodate mothers’ demanding full-time working routines alongside responsibilities for domestic work. Maids are typically female and provide childcare, assistance with housework and even care for elders (Coe, C., 2020). Adul’s business also relies on help from the girls at home, her three daughters in their late twenties and the teenage maids, fostered female relatives brought from the village. They help to portion the big bunches of greens for selling. The maids also take care of her house, cleaning and cooking, bringing Adul lunch in the market and taking care of the grandkids. In return, they are given food, a home in Kampala and, when possible, schooling or apprenticeship.
The previous section discusses various forms of employment to depict the interconnections between people and businesses, highlighting ‘the social texture in which the informal economy operates’ (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 2). For example, the market, a ‘hub of Uganda’s real economy’, relies on the ‘everyday mobilities’ of boda transportation, itself a significant source of livelihood. The regulation of both, such as through mobile platforms, SIM registration and ground rents, depicts the hybridity of informal and formal economic sectors. However, employment in the boda or market industries is still without social protection. The care work this necessitates is the focus of the following section, also contributing to feminist scholarship offering a broader understanding of work and capitalist relations, ‘bringing the household into the frame’ (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen, 2018, p. 17).

**Care Work**

As with domestic chores, work related to family care has historically been divided along gender lines. This is often still the case in Uganda today (Gertrude et al., 2019; MacNeil, 1996; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996), where “caregiving is viewed as a woman’s role even if she has full time employment” (Gertrude et al., 2019, p. 1555). Women in Kampala are often largely responsible for the day-to-day management of health and illness in their household (Wallman
and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996). Daily nursing of older relatives, including washing and feeding them, is often the responsibility of wives and daughters, who are also primarily responsible for the care of their own children (Livingston, 2003, p. 215). Additional burdens of care on mothers and grandmothers, responsible for the health and advancement of everyone in their households, applies ‘pressure’ which can result in health problems such as hypertension; this will be expanded in chapter six. Older women are often required to engage in ‘self-care’, which is also an act of care for others. Women in Kampala tend to turn to home treatment and self-prescribing (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996). This was evident in Lusozi where many older women would buy painkillers or anti-biotics in the pharmacy rather than visiting the hospital which would incur fees and interrupt working routines. Amor worries about her mother’s health since doctors have told her that her regular headaches were from over-medicating with Panadol; she would rather buy medicines that than take time off work and waste money visiting the hospital. Adul’s treatment-seeking and healthcare decisions are therefore dictated by her work. Where she might seek treatment for her children or husband, the hospital or clinic is a last resort for herself; she would prefer to self-medicate, which has been described in the past as ‘the ultimate privatisation of health’ (ibid, p. 141).

Mego is 63 years old and also avoids going to the hospital, as there is not much room for sickness in her monthly budget or schedule. Whenever she has to go to the government hospital, like she did recently when she got malaria, she can ‘spend the whole day’ waiting, and ‘they just write for you a sheet. Sometimes you don’t have a coin, so you walk away empty handed’. She believes that ‘if you have money, it finishes all your problems’. To find money herself, she hawks greens and mangoes. This has been her job for the 20 years she’s lived in Lusozi, since moving there from her home village in Kitgum. Her mother is still there in the village, and Mego calls her regularly to find out how she is, sending her UGX 10,000 (£2.15) once in a while. Normally, she starts every day by selling greens in the morning, before starting to sell her mangoes from 10am. She carries 40 mangoes in a basket on her head, as well as extra reserved in her bag. Her basket weighs up to five kilos. She walks all the way into town with this, which is five kilometres. Ugandan mangoes can be sold for UGX 1000-2000 (£0.20 to £0.40) depending on their size. Kenyan mangoes, which are bigger and weigh half a kilo each, she will sell for UGX 1500-3000 (£0.30 to £0.60). The latter can generate a lot of profit, so you can get UGX 30,000 (£6.30) on a good day. But sometimes they are rotten in the boxes you buy them in, and they don’t allow you to open the box beforehand ‘because there are many people who are after those boxes’; there are times she finds the whole box has only rotten mangoes. ‘The problem is that many people are doing the same business, so you can move the whole day and they only buy a
few’. As she explains in the film shown in figure 3.5 below, she comes home tired with her legs and chest in pain, takes Panadol, and then goes straight to the market the following morning. “All this hustle is to raise children and buy other requirements which are needed like food”. She has learnt how to take care of herself and her health, avoiding fried food and sachets of liquor, ‘if you don’t you will get physically and mentally sick’, she says, although she does allow herself to have one beer to relax every evening, and more on the weekends.

In contrast, other participants feel that their physical work has helped them maintain their health through fitness. Two older people we visited referred to their housework as a way to stay fit, “I wake up in the morning I do all the housework. When they cut the grass outside, I sweep it all myself”. Others go dancing weekly for exercise, and you often see people jogging up to the top of the hill. 64-year-old Grace has been selling milk at a stall near the entrance of Lusozi market for many years. She works from 6am to 10pm every day, ‘Monday to Monday’, with the afternoon off on Christmas day. We met her in her son’s home, where she spends time with her two-month-old granddaughter during her breaks. She is actually following doctors’ orders to put off her retirement, as her work keeps her fit and healthy.

Figure 3.4. Woman carrying mangoes in Lusozi, 2019. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins.
Kasolo Wise similarly considers his everyday working routine to be keeping him healthy. He is from western Uganda and has lived in Kampala for 15 years since his boss brought him here. He has a bicycle which he refers to as his ‘Prado’. Walking through Lusozi, you are likely to find him on the way, pushing the Prado and its daily deliveries. He feels his work keeps him healthy and occupied. “My bicycle here, is there anything else that is better than that gym?”. Kasolo’s friends call him Mr. Wise, as he has seen a lot and has understanding about life and other people. He even had his (currently broken) smartphone registered under the name Kasolo Wise. He is pragmatic about his daily life and that of others within the community. Although he relies on physical work, he refuses to work too late every day, and will turn down certain jobs; ‘you cannot do something that is heavy for your life, it means you are spoiling your life... You have to work within your strength’. He takes this literally, and only ever carries what he can manage. He has concerns for the people in the community who are without work, such as the youth taking ‘njagga’ (drugs), “you know when a person fails to get a job, he gives up on life and becomes a careless person”. And he wants “those elderly people to be ok, even to get some business”, as there is a certain age after which they can no longer work and do jobs like his. ‘Sometimes when you get sick, you can’t get money can’t provide for yourself. If you have kids at least one will take care of you’. If not, like one elderly man known in the community, it becomes hard to survive on people’s generosity. ‘The neighbours help him a lot, shelter him, otherwise he wouldn’t be alive up to today’.

The everyday lives of older people in Lusozi Godown are of course heterogenous. What is harmful to someone’s health may be beneficial to someone else. As Adul puts it, ‘everybody in Godown is living his or her own lives. They do their own thing depending on what they can afford’. But without social insurance such as pensions, sick pay or free health services, work can compromise health, and health can compromise work. During three months of research in the physiotherapy department at the nearby government hospital, which will be the focus in chapter six on health & care, it became clear that the most common problems they see are back related. The physiotherapists attribute this to the “nature of work”, with people needing to bend to clean, dig and wash. With surgery costs often being unattainable, their role is integral to ensuring people manage their injuries whilst maintaining their income. As he explains the film ‘Age & Work’ shown in figure 3.5 below, the Head of Physiotherapy hopes for more research and advocacy to support provisions for older people working in the informal sector, and therefore contributing to the economy. Older people working in the city are evidently overlooked in terms of service provision, with health needs presenting some of the greatest challenges in their everyday lives. Social insurance schemes can therefore potentially draw on existing cooperative
ways of managing health crises in the city. This has proven successful in other regions of the country, with over 21 Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI) schemes particularly based in western Uganda (Nshakira-Rukundo et al., 2019). The largest is in Kisiizi Hospital in southwestern Uganda, where a health insurance scheme was founded in 1996 to provide access to health benefits, protect members against catastrophic health spending and poverty, and ensure consistent funding for the hospital (Baine et al., 2018). It is based on existing ‘platforms of cultural solidarity’ such as burial societies (ibid). In 2019, the National Health Insurance Scheme was approved in parliament after 17 years of planning; excluding Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE), it will be one of the first social protection schemes to cater for the majority of the population who are self-employed in the ‘informal’ sector (Bukuluki and Mubiru, 2014, p. 89), at an annual contribution fee of 100,000 UGX per year

Although this national scheme is said to overlook ‘community models’


enrolment in the national scheme will also likely be dictated by socioeconomic factors, so adequate efforts to promote inclusion will be required. Evidence from the prior implementation of CBHI schemes in Uganda shows that this would be reliant on education programmes to inform beneficiaries and establish their trust (Baine et al., 2018; Basaza et al., 2019). Based on the portraits outlined in this chapter, older self-employed workers in urban settings should be primary targets of these efforts, as health insurance could be particularly beneficial to them, and thereby the people in their households and communities. This is principally true of women, who are generally responsible for the health of their household, and therefore tend to avoid seeking treatment for themselves.


Figure 3.5: Mego is shown preparing mangoes in this short film called *Age & Work*.

**Conclusion**

This chapter draws on a few participants descriptions of their business, routines and income to show how everyday activities for older people can be centred around making money in the city, just like those of younger generations. Many participants well into their 60s continue to provide for themselves and their families, their work funding everyday requirements such as rent, food, water and school fees. This includes common forms of employment, such as hawking, alcohol brewing, market vending, mobile money agents, boda driving and deliveries. The market, in
particular, is a ‘hub’ for the (informal) economy (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012, p. 267), with ‘everyday mobilities’ (Porter et al., 2017) facilitated by the boda boda industry. This provides livelihoods and social security where formal employment is not available, to navigate the shortfalls of the ‘official’ economy which it also up-holds, as evident in its strategic (de)regulation by politicians (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012).

All of the descriptions here show how participants engage with globally determined economic uncertainty pragmatically, socially, and as a part of life (Finnstrom, S., 2001; Whyte, 1997). Many participants are self-employed, and sometimes their businesses require physical work. Some people feel that this has kept them healthy by encouraging them to keep active and stay fit. Others struggle with pain, injuries and chronic illness, all of which are increasingly likely as people age. Women in particular are likely to prioritise the health needs of their family, and like Adul, will self-prescribe to avoid missing out on work or spending money at the hospital.

Throughout this chapter, the role of mutual support for seeking livelihoods within Lusozi becomes apparent. Each of the individuals, when describing their own everyday lives, look outwards at those around them. Obama considers the impact of certain policies on others in Lusozi. Kasolo Wise observes the elderly people who are reliant on their neighbours, who intervene when things become too difficult to manage. Ayaa Palma thanks her neighbours for taking care of her family when she falls sick, and she is observed and supported by other interviewees. From their vantage point on the main road, Kato and the other members of ‘Parliament’ survey other people’s everyday activities and instances of cooperation in the community, which they themselves enact within their own organization. Those seeking jobs or customers recognise the importance of their social network, of being known and trusted in the community, improving the likelihood of gaining a job or regular business despite increasing competition. Work and job seeking is approached as an open-ended activity within indeterminate circumstances, beyond the limits of rigidity and seriousness that work can be implicitly associated with (Malaby, 2009). At the same time, games and interactivity are approached as potentially productive activities in terms of social networks and income. With the support of social networks to access resources and ease pressure on individuals, strong ties and friendships are an advantage, whilst isolation can be a particular risk (Mudege and Ezeh, 2009). Work based in households and neighbourhoods is founded on the support of family, neighbours and domestic servants (Coe, C., 2020; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996). Interdependence is continually promoted along the lines of a consensual moral code of cooperation and mutual support (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261), which admonishes anything which might take away from that.
Politicians are judged according to the same standard, and most often fall short (Ferguson, 2006, p. 77). The following chapter extends the focus on social relationships in three community groups and outlines observable tensions which may emerge within an economy which both necessitates and disrupts cooperation, providing further evidence about how people mitigate shortages and enhance their capabilities collectively.

Chapter 4
Introduction

In Chapter 2, togetherness was introduced as an ideal made meaningful in the urban ‘dotcom’ context of Lusozzi, particularly in relation to the role of elders. This was developed in the previous chapter 3 on everyday life, which shows how mutual support within the community provides social insurance where health, livelihood, state infrastructure and family support fails for an (older) individual. In response to reading an earlier draft of this chapter, Ladit explained that the origins of ‘Ribe’, unity or togetherness in the Acholi sub-region, derives from ‘aleyia’, rotational or reciprocal labour for farming. “Except for a lucky few, most farmers were without equipment like tractors or ploughs, so instead used to hire the service of people in the village. Under the supervision of the ‘Rwot Kweri’, village elder, about 30 or more who would dig 1, 2, even 3 big gardens with hand hoes in one day. This was compensated with ‘awak’, good meals and local brew called ‘kwete’ in sizeable portions, either that day or at the end of the year when the harvest is ready. This would reduce the amount of time spent digging by an individual”, who would otherwise have spent a whole month working on the same task.

As shown in Opira Otto’s 2013 thesis on ‘institutional arrangements for agricultural labour’ in a predominantly Acholi village in Uganda, farmers ‘pool their labour to work on each member’s farm in succession’ (Otto et al., 2013, p. 169), an arrangement which facilitates the work pragmatically and in line with cooperative moralities. Girling’s 1962 ethnographic survey of Acholiland similarly depicted ‘awak’ or ‘work parties’, also emphasising the need to work together due to the short time-frame available for planting after the dry season and before the rains in the region (Girling, 2014, p. 89). It is worth noting that Girling also shows how ‘awak’ is not entirely egalitarian due to disparities in land access, historically determined by the number of wives and increasingly in terms of economic differentiation (ibid, 130).

Aleya, cooperative labour for accessing productive opportunities and also for enjoying life, informs how togetherness is understood in this chapter. This includes discussions about the joy of being together, the extension of family roles of sister and elderhood to friends and neighbours, and the pooling and distribution of resources. This is conveyed through a focus on three community groups in which I participated extensively. The descriptions are based on observations from regular attendance at weekly meetings, and dialogue between and with members. At times, the dialogue reveals how boundaries are drawn between formal group
proceedings and obligations, and everyday social interactions. In some instances, the dialogue also reveals discussed norms around social relations with friends and family more broadly. Overall, this shows the processes through which togetherness is reproduced and disrupted by the intensifying ‘monetisation’ of the economy and social life (Otto et al., 2013, p. 29).

In order to give an in-depth ethnographic portrayal of how this practical togetherness works within this urban setting, the chapter will focus on three community groups in which I was able to regularly participate in. All three groups discussed here were pointed out to me early on in the research as being central to the Lusozi community, with members of all ages but being particularly well attended by people over the age of 40. The groups include people of various ethnic origins, but Acholi people are the majority, reflecting the population of the Lusozi neighbourhood. In all three groups, leadership and members stated objectives of fostering dialogue, belonging and mutual support, and had observable successes in attaining them. The first one I joined, a savings group predominantly for women called Angamalonyi (Who should enrich you?), is run by the Lusozi Chairwoman, who invited me to attend the weekly parties. The second, a savings group predominantly for men called Ribe Aye Teko Organisation or ‘RATO’ (Togetherness is Strength), is run by Ladit; the group agreed to let me join as a participating member for one year of the research. Both Angamalonyi and RATO meetings take place in the central bar in Lusozi Godown, known as Soda Bar. The third group introduced here, with the pseudonym ‘Place of Peace’, was formed as an international, Church-based NGO to support HIV positive single mothers in Kampala. It is considered by local leadership and others in the community as the only NGO effectively supporting people in Lusozi. Many of the older women who participated in the research are also part of this group. Attending their joyful weekly meetings, which involved school and health education, exercise and having fun, was an opportunity to get involved, to spend time with the women and learn as a participant observer. These meetings showed that Place of Peace achieved their aims not only of providing medical and financial support, but also of fostering belonging and friendship. As outlined in this chapter, the discussions during the meetings, and with members during individual interviews, offered extensive insight about family and community expectations and the role of women.

The other two groups, RATO and Angamalonyi, are primarily savings groups or Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs), of which there are many in Lusozi and across the world. Place of Peace also has an optional savings association amongst members. In savings groups, people save money collectively as a way of rotating or accumulating and growing funds and providing a financial safety net for members. Three of the other researchers in the ASSA
project in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Dublin, Ireland and Al Quds, East Jerusalem also encountered or participated in savings groups. Whilst many wealthy elites engage in (rotating) savings groups, they are particularly important in low-income settings which lack social security infrastructures and accessible ‘formal’ credit systems (Ardener and Burman, 1995, p. 2). They are especially prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, where it’s estimated that 9 million people are members of a savings group (le Polain et al., 2018, p. 162). In Kampala, they are found to be particularly popular amongst low-income mothers who are responsible for their household (Nakirya and State, 2013). In Lusozi specifically, there are an estimated 20 SACCOs with 30-50 members in each. This ‘community-based microfinance model’ has been widely promoted and implemented by the government and international NGOs as part of a ‘development’ agenda, “as a way of pooling resources together in order to facilitate development” (Green, 2019). Geertz originally conceived of savings groups, specifically rotating funds, as a “rung on the ladder between agrarian and modern economies” (ibid, cf. Geertz, 1962). Geertz assertion fits with the dominant narrative of ‘development’ as a linear process towards highly industrialised neoliberal economies of the Global North; ‘modernisation imaginaries’ (ibid). This linearity implies the advanced nature of these regions and assumes that their social economies are the norm to which those in the Global South should strive. Ardener has since contested Geertz’ notion with the prediction (1964), and later the evidence (1995), that in fact rotating schemes have continued to proliferate in the contemporary global capitalist economy. This ‘development’ agenda also encourages people living in poverty to take responsibility for their finances through such microfinance schemes (Ferguson, 2015, p. 2). Ferguson argues that this reflects the ‘neoliberal narrative of poverty’, in which the state hands over responsibility for social protection and financial inclusion to poor people (2015: 2). Whilst this neoliberal context is often understood by the political left as an example of the ‘heartless’ decline of the welfare state, Ferguson argues that it also offers new kinds of social and financial inclusion (ibid, 4), fitting within an economic model of ‘distribution’ pervasive in the region, in which resources are shared across social networks (ibid, 90). This idea of distribution based on mutual obligations and reciprocity could apply here to community-based savings organisations. Although whilst essential to the livelihoods of many people across the region, distribution does not imply “conflict free communal unity” (ibid, 103), and often exists within tense relations, or overwhelming demands.

Savings groups come in many diverse forms, which is why anthropologist Shirley Ardener finds them to be particularly interesting for ethnographic study, as despite being “essentially identical institutions”, they nevertheless vary greatly in their detail across different societies (Ardener, 1964, p. 222). This is evident in the different saving and distribution processes of the two
groups. The majority of RATO members are men. The group is primarily organised around the accumulation of funds, with members expected to save UGX 30,000 (£6.40) in their personal account per month. The pooled funds thereby provide an emergency resource for members to seek emergency loans, and the 10% monthly interest on their return is then re-distributed amongst other members. This interest ensures the annual growth of the group account but poses a risk to borrowers’ financial stability (le Polain et al., 2018). I also heard many stories where groups’ leadership had disappeared with collected funds, compromising members’ hard-won savings. Inevitably therefore, (rotating) savings groups are founded on mutual trust, reciprocity and hierarchical organisation (Nakirya and State, 2013, p. 34).

Groups like RATO, which focus on the accumulation of funds, as shown in the section to follow, have received less attention from anthropologists than rotating savings associations (Green, 2019) like the second, primarily female, group, ‘Angamalonyi’. Ardener defined rotating savings groups like Angamalonyi as: “an association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation” (Ardener, 1964, p. 201). With these rotations, there is often a ‘ceremony of exchange’ (Nakirya and State, 2013, p. 32), gift giving and dancing. Their meetings, based on both ceremonies of exchange and official regulations, delineate the boundaries between social formality and informality. Boundaries are marked between the official group and their everyday relations, which then reiterate or alter existing social hierarchies outside of the group. Informal conversations are paused to allow for the formal proceedings to commence, and with it more prescribed interactions, such as turn-taking in meetings, or knowing when to dance and when to sit (Goffman, 1971; Green, 2019; Robbins, 2007). Long-term participation within these groups therefore reveals the challenges of maintaining boundaries between formal regulation and cooperative relationships, demonstrating the complexities of communally striving for individual gain. However, the ethnography also shows that individuals can become self-reliant through a framework of collective action (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261). This is in line with Nyamnjoh’s depiction of social action in ‘plural and diverse’ African communities like Lusozi ‘that represent histories of mobilities, cultural encounters, negotiation and flux’ (Ekechi et al., 1988; Nyamnjoh, 2017): a “socially predetermined frame…emphasises collective interests at the same time that it allows for individual creativity and self-activation” (Nyamnjoh, F., 2002, p. 115). This defines individuality within a ‘logic of collective action’, through which individual endeavours are collectivised (Nyamnjoh, F., 2002, p. 115). The environment is ordered to foster the best interests of the collective, which also serves the individual (Nyamnjoh, 2017). This supports the relevance of ‘conviviality’ as a research methodology in Lusozi: “convivial scholarship
provides…for domesticated agency as interdependence between individuals and groups as autonomous (intersubjective) agents sharing common, consensual moral and ethical codes of conduct on what it means to be, become and sustain being human in multiple ways” (ibid). As in open-ended and relational anthropological research, a convivial methodology compels active participation in community environments as a way to meet people and learn about the ‘intersubjectivity’ between individuals and groups, ‘the one and the many’ (Jackson, 2012), and the codes of conduct which seek to facilitate autonomy within interdependence.

**Ribe Aye Teko Organisation (RATO): Togetherness is Strength**

Four years ago, a young man’s child was stillborn, and he struggled to fund the transport for the burial in his home village. During the night, people across the community worked together to find money for the burial. A 53-year-old man named Tolit, who is now RATO’s auditor, had taken the young man first to Lusozi hospital in his car, and failing to find available health workers, to Mulago National Referral hospital. He witnessed first-hand the difficulties he had faced in seeking treatment and raising the necessary funds for the hospital fees and the burial. Tolit took the issue to Ladit, and assembled other Acholi elders including Obalo, the Vice Chairman. They decided to set up a shared fund that could provide support to the community, and to young families like this one. Like many other organisations in Lusozi, they started to pool their resources in a savings group, ‘Ribe Aye Teko Organisation (RATO)’ which means ‘Togetherness is Strength’. As the Vice Chairman explained, it is a “means of assisting ourselves, in times of grievance or happiness. We thought we should come together to form an association and make light the heaviness on one person.” In particular, the elders formed the organisation to facilitate productive savings amongst younger people in their community, as well as to provide them with a fund to turn to in times of both emergency and celebration. Furthermore, they hoped that their weekly meetings, from 10am-12pm every Sunday, would give younger people an opportunity to sit with their elders and learn from them, seek advice and spend time with them, as they would have more regularly in the past. As Tolit explained:

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T: [ Now ] there’s no time to sit together as a family. People don’t sit together. We used to have what you call ‘wang-oo’, a sitting room in our place, a fireplace in the evening. That’s where you get to know some of those things. But of late it’s not much. But I think it’s even the way the society is progressing, and the
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resources, because to make a fire you need even some space, a log to put in it, and then the commitment.

I: Is there ever a fireplace in Lusozi?
T: Instead of making a fire, there’s a designated place where we meet every week. It’s like a fireplace but without fire on Sundays. So that you come and get ideas at that meeting…every Sunday morning, you close off the activities in the bar, and you leave the restaurant, but there’s space that we can use for our gathering.

In the Soda Bar, the weekly “fireplace without fire” reconfigures ritual, with the aim of building solidarity and communal identity in the city. In 2018, RATO had UGX 20 million (£3,990) saved and 15 active members. The organisation is run by an ‘executive committee’, which follows a hierarchy based on age: Ladit is the Chairman; Obalo the Vice-Chairman, to act as leadership in Ladit’s absence; the Secretary who keeps minutes, reports meetings and decides agendas; Tolit, the Auditor, who works as an accountant for an NGO; the Treasurer, a prolific businessman in Lusozi, who collects the funds and keeps the books; two ‘Security’, who are responsible for policing misbehaviour and enforcing discipline during meetings; an ‘Advisor’, the owner of Soda Bar where the group meets; and six other members, including only one woman. I was also permitted to join as a member during my research, to learn from the proceedings through active participation.

At 10am, Ochido, one of the older members at 51, is the first to arrive every Sunday. He’s known to be a humble person, and usually he speaks little throughout the meeting, his arms folded. Sometimes he falls asleep. A younger man in his 30s, the secretary, was also often early, with his registry books in front of him, preparing it to update the records. Over the next hour, the rest of the members arrive, greeting everyone, sometimes shaking hands one by one, starting with the oldest person there. The tables are assembled in a line in the centre of the bar. Mama Juliet, the wife of the owner of Soda Bar, sits in the corner. Often, a few other men are sat around the tables against the walls of the bar, and she serves their beers; Nile Special, Club, Guinness. People come and go throughout the morning, sometimes hawking clothes. Winston and other members of Angamalonyi come in to set up the bar for their Sunday meeting, starting later that evening. Outside, smartly dressed parents and their children walk to and from Church services. By 11am, most of the other attendees have arrived, the last few to a chorus of complaints and threats of fines for lateness. This shows the disciplinary aspects of the groups’ meetings, established for stability and trust in the regulations, but with enough space for
anticipated non-conformity. People who are visiting relatives in the village, or otherwise engaged outside of town, are granted exception.

Figure 4.1. RATO members at a Sunday meeting in the bar. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins

Each month, everyone is meant to contribute UGX 30,000 (£6.40) to their own savings account, which is saved collectively in Ladit’s personal bank account and noted in the Secretary’s records. For each weekly meeting, members contribute UGX 2,000 (£0.40) ‘sitting fee’, for access to bar and drinks, and UGX 2,000 (£0.40) ‘chairman’s basket’, which is added to the account for ad hoc group requirements. New members pay a commitment fee of UGX 120,000 (£25.40), which is put in their account, as well as a non-refundable fee of UGX 15,000 (£3.20). A fine is charged for lateness or other ‘misconduct’, UGX 2,000 (£0.40) for members or UGX 5,000 (£1.05) for the executive committee. Absence from meetings is also fined unless a good reason is given, such as work or sickness. There is a ‘soft loan’ scheme for people who are facing financial problems or looking to expand their business, with a 10% interest levied each month. Typically, the loan comes from personal savings accounts, excluding ‘special cases’. The Treasurer keeps records of all money put in and taken out of the shared account with the organisation’s printed receipts. In 2017, the organisation bought a boda boda motorcycle for one of the younger men.
to set up his business, originally on the basis that he would pay it back over 18 months with interest. Even those with higher incomes sometimes used the saving to request loans; for example, the auditor’s employer was late paying his salary, so he requested a loan in the meantime. The group also pledges contributions for various life events of other members. During my one-year membership, we each gave UGX 10,000 (£2.10) contributions for Ladit’s 67th birthday, for the wedding of Obalo’s daughter, for the Treasurer’s graduation, the hospital bill of Amor’s husband, and for condolences, such as when a member lost one of his brothers.

RATO has a constitution, which lays out the rules and principles of the organisation, to help ‘ensure the quality of their affairs’. This defines the association’s objective to ‘promote social and economic welfare’, bring together members, and ‘provide for opportunities to examine issues affecting their lives and the community in which they live’. The constitution maps out their rules and regulations, including a duty to participate, attend meetings, and pay monthly contributions, as well as any fees. This helps to distinguish between existing social relations and contractual obligations (Green, 2019, p. 105); what has been described as “formalization from below” (Krige, 2019). Jokes and gossip, about national politics or people in the community, would be silenced in order to start the meeting. Mostly, the conversation fluctuated between Acholi and English, and Amor would translate for me where necessary. Meetings were typically focused on collecting outstanding balances, monthly contributions, loans and fines for various members. Discussions in meetings circulated around the conflicting principles of the group, both to follow the constitution, and be fair and lenient to members. Deadlines for loan repayments sometimes needed to be extended, and often monthly contributions were postponed. After the opening prayer, Ladit would give an opening summary of group concerns. Topics for discussion were raised in the agenda by the diligent Secretary, and each item would be discussed with the relevant members. If a group decision needed to be made, each member would be called to state their opinion, initially in order of the group hierarchy. As meetings progressed, comments could become more personal and voices more raised. Here is an outline of two typical discussions, which demonstrate the tensions between maintaining both lenience and constitutional order.

Meeting 16th December 2018

[ VC made a loan request of UGX 1 million for his daughter’s wedding and pledged his pool table as collateral ]

Secretary - If repayment is over three months, that would be a total of UGX 1.3 million (£275.40). This is bringing interest money for everyone…
Member 1 - But what about member 2 and his loan for the motorbike? The repayment is not complete...

Secretary - it was Ladit’s decision that we won’t share the interest from last year until all loan repayments are complete.

Vice Chairman - This group is very calm, and the secretary is very kind - but there’s a limit.

Member 2 - Let us follow the constitution. 3 months without payment you’re automatically out. **Being kind should have a limit.** I suggest next year in February.

Vice Chairman - Let me be the Chairman of deducting contributions from the accounts. Secretary, forcefully or peacefully, let’s do it **kindly, technically and constitutionally.**

[ Discussion of contributions to member who lost a relative. All members pledged UGX 5,000 (£1.05) for M’s husband’s hospital bill, UGX 10,000 for member 1’s Angamalonyi party, UGX 10,000 (£2.10) for Vice Chairman’s daughter’s wedding introduction ]

Secretary - Even if it’s not in the constitution, **as a human being, as a point of togetherness, it’s not for us to say how close a lost relative is...We’re here for unity**, so someone can present anything, and then we can decide if a member is responsible for those challenges... Condolence is already a must.

As shown in this transcript, regulations were sometimes shifted to accommodate individual financial situations and late payment. Responsibilities for managing repayments by absent members would be delegated amongst the executive members, whose airtime costs were covered by the group. Boundaries are drawn to encourage compliance with the regulations, deliberately distinguished from everyday social interactions (Green, 2019, p. 106), despite these relationships being the motivation behind the original formation of the group. As with aleya rotations, the savings and loans are founded on trust, “anchored in personal ties and guided by collective rules and expectations” (Otto et al., 2013, p. 149); failure to comply compromises the arrangement (ibid, p.147). There was an intensifying discussion that things were being let slip too easily, loans being granted too easily and without sufficient consultation of the group, with many members, both current and previous, able to easily exploit the group’s kindnesses. The boda bought by the group for one of its members was a source of pride when I first joined; but after his repayment was frozen due to sickness and family responsibilities, they felt he was no longer taking it seriously, and there was an on-going conversation about whether the money should be taken
from his account or his boda confiscated. There were also common disputes around the records, which were sometimes queried and distrusted, with fees registered for certain members that they would later dispute. At the time of my leaving the group, the Secretary stated that monthly contributions were “very poor”, not even halfway complete for the current financial year.

In addition to the main savings group, there’s a rotating fund operating alongside the group called Kalulu, meaning ‘lottery’. This was founded by RATO as an optional part of membership and is now run by Ocen Matthew. He would come on time to every meeting to prepare his registry and collect cash throughout the meeting. There are 17 members of Kalulu, some from within and outside RATO, with each contributing UGX 50,000 (£9.90) each week; UGX 40,000 (£7.90) for cash, and UGX 10,000 (£2.00) for soap and sugar, chosen as they are important items for household cleanliness and nutrition. The Sunday RATO meeting would conclude with the Kalulu beneficiary receiving the total UGX 680,000 (£135) contributions to applause from the group. Each week, this rotation would continue quietly, without discussion or issue. Some of the same members who failed to pay their monthly contribution to RATO would continue with their contributions to this smaller rotating fund. At one point, the owner of Soda bar and advisory member suggested to ‘kill the group of Kalulu’ so that RATO can stand firm;
“...this would stabilise the group and make us concentrate on the group office. You can go to the shop and buy sugar and what! We should contribute on the group office... Those who can’t afford to be in both sides should switch to one. The small group is overweighting the big one. Should we wait for the big one to die?”

It seems that the shorter-term rotation mechanism with individual household benefits offers greater incentive for investment than the longer-term savings mechanism with mutual benefits. The more the members began to subvert the RATO procedures, the greater the group’s instability, and the less incentive others had to follow the rules.

As a comparison to RATO, the format and process of the rotating savings fund ‘Angamalonyi’ are described in what follows. Both groups use the same space in the Soda bar in central Lusozi for their meetings; RATO in the morning, Angamalonyi in the evening. As Hélène Neveu Kringelbach argued in her earlier work on women’s associations in urban Senegal, the preparation for events convey their expressive ‘sensuality’; the collection of money for fees, the rental of plastic chairs, the hiring of lighting, sound systems, and the investments in individual grooming (Neveu Kringelbach, 2007, p. 8). Decorations for the Angamalonyi meeting are often being put up during the RATO meeting, colourful drapes to conceal the walls and ceiling, as shown with the blue wall hanging in the photos above. Angamalongyi meetings are more expressive and celebratory, but the rules of accountability within the rotation are more rigidly enforced than those in RATO; at some point, RATO members attended the Angamalonyi meeting and were inspired by how organised they appeared. The group evidently provides an effective framework for accommodating collective interests, and at the same time encouraging creative self-expression (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 259).

**Angamalonyi: Who should enrich you?**

Angamalonyi is a Luo phrase, meaning ‘who should enrich you?’, implying that in answer, you should enrich yourselves, together. This savings and family support group was founded in 1997 by a group of women who were displaced from their homes in northern Uganda, who agreed that they should come together and deal with their problems collectively. Angamalonyi started with small contributions and loans, which built up sums of interest to be shared annually by the group. Since then, it has become a registered community group with Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) with 78 members, mostly older women but with a few younger men and
women. This registration helps them to access government grants for women’s groups around the city. The members support each other and their families with household items like soap, sugar, even furniture and ‘revolving contributions’ of cash. Each week, there is a new beneficiary, who receives contributions during the weekly meetings. The giver and receiver would have discussed and agreed the amount of the contributions. A strict record is kept by the group secretary to ensure that the receiver then donates the same amount in return. This rotation means that the receiver has access to a lump sum of money for investments “to support the family”. A few members mentioned that at first, many husbands resented the group and the fact that their wives were away from their home for the evening, perhaps reflecting the threat posed by the women’s association to their prescribed yet undermined role as breadwinner (Neveu Kringelbach, 2007, p. 1); but over time, they saw the benefit of the rotations, with their wives able to bring home extra food and household items. The members also contribute to each other’s traditional weddings and have a ‘condolence book’, helping women pay for burials. They send as many representatives from the group to attend the burials as they can afford.

The Local Councillor 3 (LC3) for Lusozzi hill is the Chairwoman of the group, since being elected in her position by the members in 2000. She is supported by Winston, whose mother was one of the founding members, and he now helps to run the group as an MC at each of their meetings. They also have four secretaries, who manage the books. Every Sunday evening, the Angamalonyi group meets to celebrate the beneficiary, or ‘mugoole’ (bride). The Soda bar is decorated with white material hung over the tin roof and wooden walls, as well as ribbon draped the colour of the beneficiaries’ choice, often to match their outfits. The DJs set up the sound system for the party and sodas are arranged on the top table. The group secretaries come early to start updating the records in notebooks and calculating and storing the contributions in a locked box. A few members start arriving in smart dresses, greeting each other and taking a seat to wait for the party to begin. Once a small crowd of members has gathered in the bar, the beneficiary makes her entrance, flanked by two ‘honorary members’, wearing matching kitenge dresses chosen by the beneficiary and made to order. Their hair and make-up are immaculate for the event, and they sometimes have matching jewellery. Their entrance is marked by a song of their choice, and the women celebrating ‘ojili’, or ‘ululating’. They walk slowly through the bar in time with the music, to stand by their chairs at the front of the room, facing the rest of the members, who circle and dance around them. Once the song is finished, the honorary members sit either side of the mugoole, and their guests including family and friends sit at a table behind them. Late arrivals kneel to greet them, starting with the Chairwoman, followed by the beneficiary.
The party can only begin once the Chairwoman has arrived, to more ‘ojili’, the women kneeling to greet her as she takes her seat at the end of the top table. Winston, the MC, manages the proceedings with his microphone, inciting enthusiasm where it’s lacking, hurrying late members, nominating someone to give the opening prayer. “Let’s keep the spirit as usual”. Most of the group’s members are Acholi, but some are from elsewhere, so he speaks mostly in English, but also slips into Luo, Luganda and Kiswahili. He calls each member, divided into groups A, B and C, to contribute one by one. They bring the cash and lead the procession of members from the entrance to the front of the room, where the beneficiaries are, to dance with them at the centre. Typically, the members choose the same song each week, which come from different regions in Uganda, and sometimes further afield, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. This means that each song has a specific style of dancing, expressive yet codified. As the song ends, everyone quickly sits down for Winston’s public counting of the contribution, the cash held up note by note by a chosen member for the purposes of transparency, “10, 20, 30, 40, 50 THOUSAND! Can we have a round of applause please for the mugoole, our sister and beloved member!” I saw contributions vary between UGX 10,000 (£2) to 2million (£396), to a total of up to UGX 12 million (£2,377) throughout the evening, the biggest sums for the most wealthy or popular members.
Beyond the financial gains for ‘family support’, many of the members explained how much they enjoy the weekly opportunity to meet, talk, dance and forget their problems at home; they often said that “it makes life a bit interesting”. Winston said the dancing “takes the stress out for women”, helping them mitigate challenges of daily life, and find wellbeing; “it means that in Lusozì we are happy”, affirming dance as an ‘emotional resource’ to alleviate the stresses of everyday life and to gain joy in its place (Neveu Kringelbach, 2007, p. 1). Aliel Christine is 45 years old, a single mother of seven boys, and a long-standing member of Angamalonyi. She explained how she has benefitted from being in the group;

‘I saw Angamalonyi sometime back and I realized they had happiness which attracted me to join it. So, I joined. When I joined I saw happiness in me and all that thoughts and stress I had went away. When I go there on Sunday I get happiness and come back home with it...It has given me what helps me, I have built a house at home [in her home village in Palabek, Kitgum] and now I can even go to my own house. I left saucepans there and other things, so when I enter I can just start to cook, because the life at home there is difficult…. I will go back home when I get retirement because I’m still working right now...I have gotten a lot of good things [from Angamalonyi], I got joy from it because I had many thoughts of being alone, but now am very good and don’t think of anything. Every week in and week out, we are always very happy. Even if you leave your home with some anger, when you reach there, joy starts coming out of you...Angamalonyi is like my father, mother and sister which brings people to associate together.’

The same sense of friendship, stress relief and mutual support was widely reported by other members. Their WhatsApp group is filled with the photographs of the mugoole each week, as well as videos, memes and prayers. But of course, as well as happiness, there is sometimes contention within the group. The Chairwoman herself told me that she gets frustrated when she sends something on the WhatsApp group and nobody responds, “it’s disheartening”. She and Winston are deeply committed to the group, which comes with regular obligations, and they sometimes expressed their frustrations about this, particularly when the members fail to up-hold time commitments. Originally, the meetings would start from 5pm and end by 10pm. Towards the end of the year, most members failed to turn up until 8pm, the party on-going until 1am on Monday morning, putting more pressure on Winston and the Chairwoman and obligating more of everyone’s time. The beneficiaries are very disappointed if either of the group leaders fails to turn up for their day, taking it as a personal slight. This means they are committed to come to the
meeting every Sunday evening without fail, which can disrupt their other obligations such as visiting family in the village, leaving no time to rest from their already busy political schedules.

Figure 4.4. Member taking photographs of the mugoole and her honorary members. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins.

Popularity is on public display at the parties, with some members having a much bigger turn out, a more excited reception, more photographs, more enthusiastic dancing. Often, greater popularity can correspond to greater wealth, as these members are both the giver and receiver of greater sums of money. This can be exclusionary of poorer members, creating additional pressures rather than relieving stress as intended. Winston said, “poverty makes people lose confidence, they have a feeling of inferiority”. He observed that of his good friend, a younger member who sells mangoes for a living and therefore has less money than many. Everyone could see that she had a smaller crowd at her party, with smaller donations, and without any family members attending, yet he felt that she would be someone who could benefit the most from having a special evening, with all eyes on her. In contrast, members with more money like Rihanna, “a friend to many”, had to take down the fencing of Soda bar in order to fit all of her guests in. She invested in elaborate decorations, including a throne and red carpet rolled out. She
had two outfit changes, complete with crown. Her contributions were much larger and included
more additional gifts from other members. As with earlier ‘awak’ working groups, the production
of resources through cooperative practices is determined by existing economic access (Girling,
2014 (1962)); those with more fields yield more crops through cooperative ‘aleya’ farming, just as
those with more money yield greater reciprocated contributions through rotational savings.

Part of the appeal of the parties was the opportunity for the members to dress beautifully, the
beneficiaries sometimes designing dresses for themselves and their honorary members, and in
doing so expressing themselves and receiving recognition. Other community members, such as
in this conversation between two women, felt that this way of dressing up could cause
competition and bitterness:

1: The whole community cannot join Angamalonyi. Maybe I want to talk to the
Chairwoman to see if she can again develop another Angamalonyi for low-income earners
... But now this one people fear because you see how they dress...you would buy a dress
like you are competing, you have to put on more smartly than others
2: Those people buy dresses. My auntie bought gomesi (dresses) for UGX 300,000 (£63.50)
how many?
1: You see that’s another loss, we want something which you cannot inject a lot of money
into it... Now if for your week you have cooked, next week I will also want to compete, I
will put on smartly, now you end up buying expensive clothes, yet you’re going to get less
money because you’re competing with others. And if you do things that are not nice to
people they will even start talking on you, “ehh for this one it was just like that”, so people
fear that...there are those who come to show off, she gives UGX 600,000 (£127) and then
UGX 120,000 (£25.40) [laughing] so a person who has brought UGX 10,000 (£2.10) feels
very small and you don’t fit in the whatever...they select, if someone has money they will
come to your party
1: [laughing] Yeah, I saw it
...
2: You have money, they will come!
...
1: …because of your dress, because you cannot afford nice shoes, they still talk of you
[laughing]. And the worst is that the little that you contribute they have to announce it
For the Chairwoman, this competition is one of the beneficial aspects of the group, as it motivates the women to care about their appearance. As she says in the below short film:

“Women used not to dress smartly but now women want at least on a Sunday, they want to be the best dancers, you want to be the most beautiful, your hair should look so smart. So that happiness, sometimes I sit and say eh eh! I have done my part.”

Figure 4.5. Film: Angamalonyi.

Whilst the group can put individual members under certain pressures, generally it is successful in financially supporting women and their families in Lusozi, providing a place for them to express themselves, to make friends, dance and enjoy life - whilst leaving their problems at home. As in Aliel’s account of her membership, this joy or ‘enrichment’ is something you can actively seek by taking part, whilst leaving stress behind. In this way, whilst drawing from the idiom of family responsibility within the group and providing ‘family support’ beyond, Angamalonyi is distinct from family life and offers an escape from the pressures it imparts on women in particular. The group accommodates, recognises and celebrates the beneficiary, who can gain as an individual from crafting self-expression whilst being together in enjoyment with others. This illustrates the definition of ‘togetherness’ introduced by participants throughout this monograph as a form of mutual support which can alleviate burdens on an individual, an ‘interdependence as insurance against dependence’. Angamalonyi, who should enrich you? Yourselves, together.
Place of Peace has similarly achieved the aims of creating a sense of family support through hierarchy and sisterhood, both in being together and in tangible forms of assistance. Many of the members of Angamalonyi, including Aliel, also attend Place of Peace; it offers school fees for many of the single mothers in the Lusozi community, as well as access to healthcare and education for themselves. Beyond that, members stated that they found “sisters, even mothers” thanks to Place of Peace, an extended family within their neighbourhood to guide them and share their problems with.

**Place of Peace**

![Figure 4.6. Women in an exercise class at Place of Peace. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins.](image)

Place of Peace is an international faith-based NGO, set up by an Italian woman in 1992 when she saw young people out of school in Uganda. The group in Lusozi is one of a few Place of Peace branches around the city. Many participants, including local leaders, consider it to be the only NGO which has really helped the community in Lusozi. Their mission statement includes the following:
The greatest need of a human being is the need for belonging, which gives stability and certainty in all aspects of life… The person who belongs becomes protagonist because he receives a face and receives a consciousness that unites him with the reality… Belonging to a design that is not yours, that is to say, belonging to somebody else, you become free.\textsuperscript{ix}

Since 1992, Place of Peace has supported single mothers with medicine, and education in health, literacy, finance and skills such as beading, and increased mobility. They have visited national parks in Uganda, as well as trips to Nairobi, Rwanda and Italy. They even guarantee their children get a good quality education, either in their school or by paying their school fees. As most of the women are HIV-positive, they visit the Place of Peace staff for antiretroviral (ART) medications, as well as free testing and counselling on how to adhere to the medicine. A nurse is freely available for consultations and prescriptions every day, and there is also a doctor every Saturday. Any cases that are too complicated are referred to the relevant hospital. Every Monday and Wednesday, Place of Peace hold their meetings and classes, which the directors of Place of Peace Uganda and of the Lusozí branch permitted me to join on a regular basis, “go and take part, maybe you can shake your bones, this is what we do!”

During the first meeting I attended, the Director explained that she is proud of what the organisation has achieved and is particularly grateful for the friendship Place of Peace offers its members. She feels that it has “given them back life” as it has helped them to “discover themselves”; “before they were miserable, but now you can’t even tell they’re sick”. The Nurse later explained that they teach the women that they have personal value, reminding them that ‘sickness including HIV doesn’t mean you’re not like other people, who will also inevitably one day suffer sickness themselves’. In the past, HIV was more stigmatised and isolating but “they’re now free thanks to Place of Peace”; this was palpable in the health and happiness observable in their weekly meetings. The conversation below demonstrates the agreement between the Place of Peace director, nurse and Amor about the importance of the unity offered by the group:

Director: They feel they’re sisters
Nurse: Being together…
M: Unity is good.
Director: You have it, get friends, go back free.
M: You can’t just finish your problems yourself.
Director: Talking about problems, you learn that mine is the same…you can be happy when you’re sick, even when you know you’re going to die.

Like Angamalonyi members, the women can join Place of Peace as a way of seeking happiness and leaving stress behind. These sisterly friendships within the group, sharing problems and laughter, were evident both during the meetings and during interviews with members, as in these notes from an interview with Amor’s Aunt:

She says she is happy with Place of Peace as it helps her pay the children’s school fees, and also means she’s met many friends. She herself grew up with boys, and at first found it hard to cope with women, which Place of Peace has helped her with. She has gained “sisters, even mothers”, who tell you off after a quarrel, help guide you. Problems shared “kill stress”. They teach them that all people have equal value, “you’re all the same”, whether you’re rich or poor, HIV-positive or negative. She has also become more physically fit thanks to the training. She’s travelled to Jinja, Nairobi, paying only “some little money”.

The training Amor’s Aunt refers to is an exercise class supported by a group of young men. Place of Peace also offers its members education. Every Wednesday, a teacher would come to provide lessons in English and Maths. Many of the women have had limited or no schooling, so the focus was on primary level education, with the group split into ability, from primary 1 (P1) to primary 7 (P7). As the male teacher once reminded them, “if you want to learn you have to forget about your age and think of yourself in P3”. Lessons would be delivered in a ‘repeat after me’ style, the women responding in chorus; “when you want to learn you have to speak”. Sometimes, topics such as family, finances and sexual health were discussed, with the women bringing forward their ideas or questions one by one. Most members speak Luo, but not all of them, so lessons were translated into Luganda, or given entirely in English - some of the women joked that they had been in P1 for 10 years as a result, reflecting the obstructive hegemony of the English language in education (Nankindu, Kirunda & Ogavu, 2015; Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2005). But many said they were happy to now be able to spell their name, meaning they could now give signatures when required.
As well as English, sometimes the teachers focus on a particular theme for discussion, encouraging feedback and questions from the women. One lesson was about family duties and responsibilities. The transcript below reveals consensus on the roles of fathers, mothers and children, and a sense of changing duties in response to demands of the wider world:

Teacher: The mother cannot do the duties of the father but of course it depends on the situation. What a man can do a woman can also do, these days women have overtaken. That one comes as a result of disorganisation in the world. But in accordance with the setting, there are specific duties. Can anyone tell us what your husband does? Some of what the father does at home?

[Laughs]
Member 1: Producing children!

[Laughs]
Member 2: Pay rent.

…

Teacher: The father is the head of the family. Do we all agree?
Members: Yes.
Teacher: In case of any issue at home, who is responsible? Who stands forward? It is the man who comes out, not so?
Members: Yes [chorus]
Member 3: A man caters for basic needs – rent, food, shelter, school fees.
**Member 4: Those days yes but these days no…**
**Member 5: Nowadays they put on trousers for nothing.**
Member 6: They only come for graduation.
Member 7: If you ask for money, they will slap you. They blame the women.
Member 8: You have to fulfil the point of marriage to produce children as in the bible.
…
Teacher: What about the role of the mother?
Member 10. Cooking food.
…
Member 11. Washing clothes.
…
Member 13. Teach the children. Men have little time to stay at home, so you find that most of the time mothers stay at home with their children. The behaviour of a child always reflects training given by the mother
Member 14. When greeting, people don’t kneel anymore as sign of respect. It is a sign of Dotcom. Let us revive it. At the moment there’s no respect.
Member 15. The work of a woman and also man is producing children.
Teacher: What about the role of children?
Member 16. Respecting parents.
…
Member 18. They need to perform well at school. That was not here initially but because of world needs we are now taking them up
Member 19. The world is moving forwards, it’s not going backwards.

Whilst this conversation was humorous in tone, the jokes express some of the challenges of being a mother in Lusozi, many of whom often bear the responsibilities of providing for their families, looking after the household and bringing up children on their own. In the past, Christine Obbo noted that the wage labour of women in Kampala was considered to compromise their domestic work and child-rearing responsibilities, a view that “ignores the fact that women without a separate income are subject to the whims of men who may withhold...
support from their families while spending their money on drinking” (Obbo, 1980, p. 8); today, as shown in this transcript, Obbo’s perspective is widespread amongst participants in Lusozi, and many women also provide for their families as part of their domestic responsibilities.

Shifting positions within the family in response to ‘the disorganisation in the world’ also arose during a discussion about fundraising for a member who had lost her sister. The director encouraged the members to attend her vigil, even if they didn’t know her personally, “it’s not about money, it’s about presence. We all know how it feels to lose someone, to have that gap”. Another member had recently lost a husband. A discussion arose: “who should we help first? Who should we give money to? How do we decide if a relative is close enough?” The consensus was that, if it’s “within the circle” of immediate family – a mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter – they will contribute “as many times as needed in the month”. Someone responded, “every second, every moment, people are passing on”. They agreed they would not contribute for those outside the circle, such as Jaja’s, Uncles, Aunts. The Director concluded the discussion, “Death is not all about money. Presence is more important. Money is dividing us. Going to see somebody is more precious than anything you will carry…but give a contribution of 1k if you can. Visiting a member who lost her sister doesn’t need transport, you can just go by foot.”

This conversation suggests that the immediate family is increasingly prioritised over extended family, in line with participants’ observations outlined in chapter 2 and relevant scholarship (see for example Bukuluki and Mubiru, 2014, p. 10; Nakirya and State, 2013, p. 31; Tamale, 2020, p. 230). To an extent, this assertion can be challenged with evidence in the next chapter about the role that mobile phones play in extending family ties and obligations across distances. This is supported by research in other African contexts, which found the phone to support “intimacy over distance” (Porter et al., 2015, p. 42; cf Kneidinger 2014), both between generations and across extended family networks (ibid, p. 44). Perhaps this ‘reconfiguration of family networks’ serves as an ‘imperfect replacement’ (Coe, 2014, p. 59; Porter et al., 2015; Sigona et al., 2015), with tensions between what is ideal and what is possible emerging in the transcripts above. Distances between relatives also support the need for family-like ties and obligations amongst friends close by in the city, as for example in this conversation amongst Place of Peace members emphasising the need to be ‘present’ for others in times of mourning.

In this conversation, presence is considered superior to money, which is a divisive entity, and the conversation itself reveals the divisions in opinions about responsibilities concerning money. At least a small contribution is encouraged, suggesting that money can also represent and contribute
to social unity as well as division (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989). Whilst money is often conceived as amoral and anti-social, as in Ladit’s earlier inversion of money and respect, and the Director’s assertion that “money is dividing us”, it is also subsumed within relational and moral domains, such as family expectations, or money as a gift or expression of condolence. Responsibility towards family and friends in times of sickness and death, in terms of both presence and money to ‘divide the burden’ (Gertrude et al., 2019, p. 1556), will be further examined in the subsequent chapters on mobile money, health and care, and cooperative morality respectively.

Conclusion

The three groups outlined here seek togetherness, which is understood in this chapter in relation to Ladit’s description of ‘aleya’ or communal farming in Acholi; digging that could take one person a month to finish takes 30 people just one day, followed by ‘awak’, a meal and celebration that can be enjoyed together (Girling, 2019 (1962); Otto et al., 2013). This idea of togetherness depicts the potential for a collective to alleviate burdens and create joy for an individual. This emphasis on “interconnections, interrelationships, interdependence, collaboration, coproduction and compassion” (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 259) is a ‘convivial’ response to increasing economic uncertainty; as Nyamnjoh argues in an earlier study on ‘Africa’s Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging’, “the collectivity shares the responsibility of success and the consequences of failure with the active and creative individual, thereby easing the pressure on individuals to prove themselves in a world of ever diminishing opportunities” (Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 92). The collectivisation of individual endeavours, or interdependence, also affords self-expression and self-reliance, an ‘insurance against dependence’ (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261). This is evident for example in the income from the boda purchased by RATO, or in financial independence gained at Angamalonyi, as in Aliel’s investment for her retirement, or as in the friendships gained at Place of Peace; “belonging to somebody else, you become free.”

Across all three groups, the sense of belonging is compared to that of family, providing elders or sisterhood to turn to for advice or assistance. Perhaps family tensions are resolved through these extended community ties; for example, group members have an opportunity to leave the stresses of family life at home, whilst supporting their household. RATO members gain social insurance through pooled resources; Angamalonyi members gain happiness and relieve stress at their Sunday parties, as well as benefits of the ‘family support’ rotation; Place of Peace members gain accessible health services and education for themselves and their children, and a sense of
belonging. Compassion and fun are observable in these groups, as well as the inevitable pressures and obligations which emerge through long-term everyday participation, indicative of tensions of communally striving for individual gain.

Savings groups in particular present an interesting context to consider the co-existence of seemingly conflicting values within community relationships; formality and creativity, communal and capital, exclusion and belonging. Other anthropologists who have studied savings groups (Ardener, 1964; Green, 2019) observe a paradox in self-organised groups, ‘formalized from below’ (Krige, 2019). In RATO, for example, there is a continual debate between the need to act both constitutionally and kindly. The groups’ intention to “make light the heaviness on an individual”, and the existing friendships between members, can make it easy to ignore the rules or refuse to repay a debt. In Angamalonyi, financial obligations can place a particular burden on its poorer members, the same stresses the group intends to alleviate.

There are evidently both tensions and possibilities within interdependent social relations. As Geshiere’s work shows, there are dangers implicit in closeness and trust (Geschiere, 2013). The simultaneously liberating and constraining potential of relationships is further exposed in consideration of money and exchange. In low-income settings, there is said to be an ‘intensified’ dependence on both social relations and on money (Krige, 2019), exacerbating the implicit dangers of both. However, as will be the focus in chapter 7 on cooperative morality, the two are not mutually exclusive; money is evidently embedded within relationships, and can therefore initiate, strengthen or destroy them (ibid, p.11). This is demonstrated particularly concretely through mobile money remittances, shown in the next chapter to be an act of care.
Chapter 5

Domesticating the Dotcom Wave

The chapter will outline findings about phone use amongst research participants in Lusozi, particularly related to care for older relatives. This includes everyday practices such as: phone sharing within households; people buying phones for their older relatives at home in rural areas and teaching them how to use them; enacting ‘care at a distance’ via phone calls and mobile money transfers; using WhatsApp to share information and coordinate care across families and community groups; and younger people helping their parents to seek news, networks, entertainment with music and film downloads. Throughout the chapter, ‘mobile phones’ will be used to refer to small handsets without access to internet, known as ‘buttons’ in Lusozi, ‘smartphones’ will refer to internet enabled phones with a touch screen, and ‘phones’ will simply refer to either or both. Mobile phones are owned by the majority of participants, around 60%, and smartphones by a growing and significant minority, around 35%; this proportion also reflects national statistics on phone ownership in Uganda.

With differentiated access to smartphones, existing social inequities are reproduced through ‘digital capital’, the distributed advantages of technology and “the wherewithal to use it”, which includes digital literacy and also calling and data costs (Hampshire et al., 2015). Like Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, ‘digital capital’ is convertible into other forms of capital for attaining social mobility: connections, knowledge, health, skills, resources (ibid). The open-ended potential of ‘digital capital’ through smartphones can also be supported by Ivan Illich’s concept of the phone as a ‘convivial tool’, which like Nyamnjoh’s theory of convivial social action elaborated in the previous chapter (2012, 2017, 2005, 2002), allows for “autonomous action by means of tools least controlled by others”, opening up possibilities for self-actualisation which also ‘enriches the environment’ (Illich, 1973, p. 18). ‘Convivial tools’ can also be interfered with and regulated for the purpose of control (ibid); this can be seen in increasing ‘digital authoritarianism’ (Namasinga Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 394) of Uganda’s politics, with taxation and internet blockades introduced during this research. The ethnographic impact of these policies will also be discussed here.

Smartphones can be broadly understood as an icon of dotcom. As shown throughout the thesis so far, dotcom can be used to describe the contemporary era and the generation growing up within it, often referring to a broad and complex set of ‘world changes’ and their impact on
values of respect and relatedness. These dotcom trajectories encompass various yet intersecting aspects of the wider world, incorporating, for example, the influence of social media and ICTs, lifestyles in the city, and neoliberal ideologies of ‘development’. The phone acts as a lens onto efforts to establish continuity within relationships despite these societal shifts, reconfiguring hierarchies and what Cati Coe calls kinship ‘repertoires’, “ways of speaking, thinking, and feeling about the family – that mobilize material resources and people in ways that are considered normal and natural” (Coe, 2014, p. 5); in this case, the older generation providing the younger generation with access to an education, and the younger generation providing care for elders in later life and often in their rural homes. Phone practices themselves expand these family expectations across distances, bringing both new conveniences and obligations. This is one of the primary findings of this research about ageing with smartphones: that the same dotcom technologies associated with declining respect for elders and their experiences also accommodates their care across shifting terrains. In the smartphone then, the “dotcom wave” does not only overwhelm or erode existing relationships and social norms, but also becomes domesticated and even originates within them.

This chapter therefore adopts the ‘digital anthropology’ approach, which prioritises the appropriation of technologies within specific socio-cultural and historical contexts (Horst and Miller, 2012, 2006). It also follows Science and Technology Studies (STS), which takes a situated, nuanced perspective on the use of ‘technological artefacts’ such as phones to counter the hype or pessimism of ‘technological determinism’, instead considering how contextual factors are both shaped by and shaping of the use of phones (Larsson and Svensson, 2018; Pols, 2012). It also builds on previous ethnographic studies of ICT and phone use in sub-Saharan Africa (de Bruijn et al., 2009; Porter et al., 2015; Pype, K., 2017; Archambault, 2013), and the few conducted in Uganda in particular (Burrell, 2010; Namatovu and Saebo, 2015; Svensson and Wamala Larsson, 2016, 2018; Vokes, 2018), complementing them by offering the overlooked perspective of people over the age of 40 on the wider ‘intergenerational implications’ (Porter et al., 2015, p. 38) of the phone. As highlighted in these other studies (e.g. Archambault, 2013; de Bruijn et al., 2009; Vokes, 2018), the ethnographic lens of the phone offers insight into processes of social continuity and change more broadly; this lens is particularly focused here in consideration of intergenerational relationships, from the often overlooked perspective of older people.

Understanding phone use and conceptualisation required diverse methodological approaches. More open-ended methods such as interviews or a ‘story based approach’ (Hampshire et al., 2015, p. 91) contributed to an understanding of how people conceptualise, aspire towards, reject
or negotiate access to smartphone capacities, with stories about smartphones often drawing out wider discussions about family and social expectations. These insights were supported with information about more ‘mundane’ day to day use (ibid), often found looking at recent phone usage based on data within the phone such as call lists, and sought through structured questionnaires. For these ‘phone surveys’, we looked for participants who we already knew and who might be comfortable sharing this personal data. This includes an ‘app interview’, where we asked 30 participants to discuss all the apps on their smartphone. We conducted a ‘mobile money survey’ amongst 170 participants at two mobile money stands in central areas of Lusozi. Amor would ask customers if they would be happy to participate and answer questions about the purpose of transfer, amount and their relationship to the recipient or sender. We also conducted a questionnaire with 50 participants who owned phones, whether these were ‘buttons’ or smartphones. This questionnaire included questions about the ownership of mobile phones and smartphones across the household, by age and gender; number of calls and text messages sent and received in the past week, as well as asking people about the amount of airtime and data topped up, and how regularly this happened; social media use before and after the implementation of the ‘OTT tax’. Finally, the survey also asked for details of participants’ last three calls and remittances, the apps they have on their phone and their usage and sending a receiving airtime and ‘beeps’ (dropped or cancelled calls). Similar questions were included in a final survey concluding the research carried out amongst 150 participants.

“Mobile Phones Have Brought the World Together”

In Lusozi, people would often say that “mobile phones have brought the world together”, which could refer to an expansion of home, or encounters with the wider world. Undoubtedly, they offer people new opportunities for connectivity and with the advent of internet-enabled smartphones in 2011, these possibilities become even broader (Goggin, 2012, p. 101). In recent decades, as witnessed by older research participants, there has been an unprecedented ‘mobile revolution’ in Africa (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2012b, p. 1), where take-up of mobile phones has been particularly rapid and dynamic (Goggin, 2012, p. 101), the fastest rate of growth in the world (Vokes, 2018, p. 274). This is true in Uganda, where mobile phone ownership continues to increase year on year. A report by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) on telephone subscriptions in Uganda at the end of March 2020 found that there are 28.4 million people with mobile subscriptions used in the prior three months, representing a ‘tele-density’ of 67% of the population\textsuperscript{4}. This compares to 53% in 2014, and just 4.9% in 2004\textsuperscript{3}. A 2018 report by The National Information Technology Authority Uganda (NITA-U) found that 14.4 million
Ugandans (37% of the population) now access the internet on their mobile phones\textsuperscript{lxii}. The Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) 2016/17, carried out by NITA-U, found that only 3\% of households have a working computer\textsuperscript{lxiii}, confirming that mobile phones are the primary platform for accessing the internet in Uganda.

Since 1998, the arrival of telecommunications companies in Africa is said to have painted the landscape yellow with branded awnings (de Bruijn, 2014). Mobile phones have also brought employment opportunities, with vendors selling accessories and airtime, and sending mobile money, as well as offering charging points, phone repairs. There were 33 airtime and mobile money vendors in Lusozi Godown at the time of fieldwork, with many vendors complaining at the rate of growing competition. At a national level, the numbers of mobile money vendors continue to increase, 3.5\% up in 2018\textsuperscript{lxiv}. MTN, Airtel and Africell are the dominant mobile phone providers. When exchanging phone numbers, people in Kampala often offer two numbers, one MTN and one Airtel. Calls and texts between the same provider are cheaper, so people swap SIM cards depending which number they are calling. SIM swapping is also sometimes a response to varying phone reception across the country, although this is mainly an issue in rural areas; as Amor’s Dad Kilongeni explained, “in my village, MTN reception is so poor, so I created an alternative line…If this one fails the other one takes over”.

Whilst owned by a significant minority now, it is predicted that smartphones will dominate the market in the near future\textsuperscript{lxv}. The greater penetration of internet-enabled phones in Uganda is partly due to a proliferation of cheaper models being introduced to the market. For example, the Chinese brand Techno are selling internet enabled phones for as little as 58,000 UGX (£12), making them more accessible. Mobile money vendors in Lusozi estimate that about 30\% of their customers had smartphones, but ‘mostly youth’. This estimation was broadly reflected throughout the ethnography; across a total of 204 individual interviewees, with an average age of 51, 72 (35\%) had working smartphones, 116 (57\%) had a mobile phone only, and 19 (8\%) currently had no phone of their own - either because their previous phone was broken or stolen (15), or because they had never been able to afford one (4).

Recent statistics on phone ownership in Uganda, although quickly outdated, currently show that demographic factors related to age, gender and geography influence the likelihood of access to mobile phones and smartphones. A higher proportion of young people own phones than older people. More men own phones than women\textsuperscript{lxvi}, with a 17\% gender gap in mobile phone ownership and 48\% in mobile internet use reported by the Global System for Mobile
Communications (GSMA) in 2020, being particularly pronounced in rural areas\textsuperscript{lxvii}. Overall, more people living in urban areas own mobile phones than their rural counterparts\textsuperscript{lxviii} and in Kampala, there is better access to telecommunication, electricity and internet infrastructure than in rural areas (Namatovu and Saebo, 2015, p. 338). These ‘digital divides’ are also broadly reflected across this ethnography. According to a household survey of 50 participants between September and December 2018, with an average of 5.6 people in their households, 1 man had a mobile phone compared to 0.65 women (with a total of 31 mobile phones owned across the household), with an average of 0.9 men vs 0.6 women with a smartphone (with a total of 25 smartphones owned). The average age of smartphone owners in the household was 31 years old, compared to 38 years for mobile phone owners.

Whilst mobile phones compress distances in an unprecedented way, “bringing the world together”, they also accommodate continuities in people’s relationships, expectations and obligations. This includes the ways that access to phones is embedded in existing social inequities. For example, a common approach for negotiating access to phones is through sharing them within the household or between neighbours. However, as shown in earlier studies in of phone sharing Uganda, this is also a complex process entwined in an existing “moral economy” (Burrell, 2010, p. 236). Phone owners are able to refuse access to others, with preferential access and systematic exclusion as deemed socially appropriate; for example, husbands can restrict their wife’s usage (Burrell, 2010, p. 238; Svensson and Wamala Larsson, 2016, p. 210; Porter et al., 2020). As shown below, phone sharing in Lusozi was sometimes similarly restricted according to the phone owner’s discretion, thus further re-establishing hierarchies between those with and without a phone.

**Phone Sharing**

Phone sharing practices are common across family and community, and between the city and the village. Of the 50 people who responded to the phone survey, only four people said that they are the sole user of their phone, with the rest citing an average of three other people who have access to borrow them. This includes their children, siblings, partners, neighbours and friends, who use them to play games, take photos, call friends and play music. Airtime was also commonly circulated between family and friends, with 33 people of 50 reporting that they have sent airtime in the last six months, and 30 people reporting that they have received it. ‘Beeping’, drop calling someone in order for them to call you back and cover the cost of the call, was also common, with 40 people in a survey of 50 having ‘beeped’ someone in the last six months, and
who said they have been ‘beeped’ themselves. In this way, communication is enabled, and resources are distributed across social networks.

48-year-old Nakito and her son jointly own and run a hair salon in Lusozi. Whilst she has her own ‘button’ phone for work calls, she does not have enough money to buy a smartphone, so she shares one with her son. On alternate weeks, they take their turn to be the main smartphone holder, updating the background photo, the Facebook and WhatsApp accounts, and even the password. That way, both of them have periods of independent ownership, but can also use the phone at any time with permission from the current owner first. Within the phone, there are certain apps that only one or the other uses, such as an app called ‘Love Quotes’ that only her son uses to choose messages for his girlfriend. He’s the one who knows how to load music on the phone from a memory card, which they update regularly, especially when they hear something new they like on the radio. During her week, she looks for her music, as she prefers traditional Baganda songs. They have the same photos, mostly those she’s taken of her young grandchildren “to keep the memories”, especially on special occasions like their birthdays.

Figure 5.1. Nakito with her son and grandson in their salon. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins.
Other instances of sharing are not so mutual or egalitarian. This was particularly apparent during interviews with people who did not currently have a mobile phone, as was the case for Acen, a 40-year-old single mother. Acen has heard of the internet, and that it means you can get to know what’s happening outside of Uganda. She would like to learn how to use it, but for now she ‘doesn’t even know how to use a phone’. Without education, stable employment or support from the father of her children, she struggles to pay the rent and school fees, making it impossible to consider buying additional items such as a mobile phone. Occasionally, once or twice a month, she loads 500ugx (£0.10) airtime onto a neighbour’s phone in order to communicate with her people in the village. They have to show her how to use it, to dial the phone and make the call. Normally, she’s calling to check on her relatives, to find out if anyone is sick or if everything is still stable. If they need to talk to her, they also call the neighbour’s number. Last time she heard from them, they had called to tell her that her mother was sick. She would have preferred to go there physically to check on her, but she failed to raise the money for transport, so she sent them 10,000 UGX (£2) instead. At the time of the interview, she had not heard an update on her mother’s health because she had been unable to call them again. She has had some challenges when asking the neighbours to use the phone; sometimes when they see her coming, she overhears them complain that ‘she’s coming to disturb us’, so now she fears to ask. She tried to ask from a second neighbour, who ‘refused totally there and then’, claiming that her phone did not have any battery and that she’s always out. This is one of the problems causing her to ‘feel totally helpless’.

The practice of sharing access to phones responds to economic necessity, thus reflecting, reinforcing or reconfiguring social inequities. As in Acen’s case, the restricted ability to access mobile phones has implications for her being able to take care of her relatives, to gain information and to do so independently of her neighbours. This can serve to exacerbate existing inequalities based on income, expanding the capacities of the phone owner but not necessarily those of their neighbour. This illustrates the concept of ‘digital capital’ (Hampshire et al., 2015), which distributes access to other forms of social resources.

Access to ‘digital capital’ also depends on various costs associated with using a phone. We found that the majority of smartphone owners participating in this research topped up 1,000-2,000ush (£0.20-0.40) on a daily basis, for airtime and data. This suggests that typically, calling and internet were inaccessible to smartphone owners at least once a day. With airtime and data limitations, phone services are often used on a controlled basis; WhatsApp groups avoided in favour of less data intensive 1-1 messaging, Instagram and YouTube used sparingly, and data switched on and
off only when needed. Data and storage shortages on cheaper smartphones restricts space for new app downloads, or for storing messages and images. With data and storage preservation a priority, the smartphone is a tool which must be manoeuvred in order to achieve specific communicative ends.

Taken together, these various factors suggest that ‘digital divides’ are not formed in a straightforward binary between smartphone owners and non-smartphone owners as the term implies, but instead are formed through more complex and shifting processes (Hampshire et al., 2015; Burrell, 2009: 232). This is also evident in variations in phone quality. For example, many people had owned smartphones in the past that had since been stolen or ‘spoiled’. As found in other resource poor neighbourhoods, many second hand phones circulate and break down (Hampshire et al., 2015). Kilongeni, Amor’s Dad, was my first interviewee, and we had many conversations throughout the research about smartphones, how they are used and their impact on social life. A few months after we first met, his smartphone had broken and the heavily taxed repair costs 150,000 UGX (£31), as much as a new phone. Either way, he couldn’t afford it at the time. Meanwhile, he is using a ‘button’ phone which he bought for a discount and now finds to be ineffective, failing to register missed calls. This was causing problems with his daughter, who often calls to check that Kilongeni had picked up her 5-year-old son safely from school. Whilst she works full time, Kilongeni is “child support”, and he finds it frustrating that she calls every day. “She likes calling but I don’t feel good. As a grandparent, give me responsibility. Since I brought her up as a mother, I cannot forget him”.

In the following section, Kilongeni’s narration about his use of phones and their broader implications introduces how they can be representative of ‘intergenerational encounters’ (Porter et al., 2015). This considers these encounters from the perspective of the ‘middle generation’, neither young nor elderly, but with care responsibilities for both. Alongside other ethnographic examples, it shows how the use and conceptualisation of the phone becomes embedded within existing intergenerational expectations and discourses, whilst also reconfiguring them.

**Parents of the Dotcom Generation**

Kilongeni has witnessed how phones have brought ‘the world together’, having lived both with and without the conveniences of reduced distances between people, faster communication and financial transfers.
At least for us when we were growing [in Palabek, Kitgum], information that we normally get is the one inside us, whatever was happening near us we knew. Within the district we knew. What was also happening in Kampala, once in a while, you will also get to know. The only media we were using was sometimes the radio... So, these phones came to Uganda in 1997, 1997... So, you see, this phone has helped people now. It has, it has in fact brought the world closer...I used to suffer with school fees when I was still in secondary school. There was a cousin of mine in Entebbe, whenever I wanted school fees, I would write a letter, stamp and post it through post office - it would take two months! Two months! For him to write... They chase you when you don’t have the school fees, you remain at home. So now you see how it assists people’s lives. I can now pick my phone, if I want to call mum, I call mum...

Like many other older participants in Lusozi, he bought a “simple phone” for his elderly mother in the village so he can call and check on her. This accommodates emotional, practical and financial support, even across distances (Porter et al., 2015, p. 41). “I always need to call her”. Others, like Lakot, have received a smartphone from their children; she had told her three sons that she was praying for one of ‘those phones’, swiping her right forefinger across her left hand to imitate a screen. Her sons later surprised her with one as a gift. She said, “my children don’t want me to be worried because they know I took care of them”.

Sons and daughters buying their parents mobile phones and smartphones, and teaching them to use them, can therefore signify respect and reciprocal, intergenerational care; a commitment to staying in touch, and also helping them access news, entertainment and social networks. This reflects Porter et al’s conceptualisation of young people as “family information hubs”, able to support with using the phone and accessing information (Porter et al., 2015, p. 44). Some participants in this research explained how their children show respect and good relations by sharing information about phone use or gained via the phone. Omara has two adult sons who help him communicate with people via Facebook and WhatsApp; as expanded later in the chapter, these are the most commonly used social media platforms in Lusozi, sometimes synonymous with ‘the internet’ itself.

“Now, Dotcom, what does it mean? We learn also from them [young people]... They can do it for me, now I’m learning also from them slowly slowly, so I will be doing it myself... I was advising them, ‘you people, you study very hard, you should know the
internet and the rest of the things because the world has changed now, everything is computerised, so you need to know’, to keep us in contact with the outside.”

Typically, as shown in earlier themes, older participants said their role as an elder is to educate the younger generation. With dotcom, the younger generation become the teachers or ‘information hubs’ for their elders (ibid), with the digital capital or wherewithal to share their knowledge and connections with the outside world. As Archambault shows in her research in Mozambique, the mobile phone offers young people a tool to navigate social expectations, by providing a platform for secrecy and disguise (Archambault, 2017, 2013). This can cause uncertainties and moral ‘disquiet’ amongst older people, their inherited and experiential cultural knowledge increasingly ‘side-lined’ (Porter et al., 2015), as expressed by many participants in this research. As Kusimba et al put it in their 2016 study of mobile money in Kenya, “among elders, mobile phones are perceived as empowering women and youths to pursue affairs or run away from school” (Kusimba et al. 2016; see also McIntosh 2010). But as this ethnography shows, rather than representing a pure inversion in the hierarchy of age, the younger generation sharing their ‘dotcom’ knowledge with their parents can also be incorporated within existing ‘repertoires’ of elder respect, and a willingness to ‘keep them in contact’ with each other and with the outside world.

Soon, Omara plans to return to his home village, where he will be able to keep in contact with his sons in Kampala, “from the village it's very simple, I will keep in contact with my phone”. As found in various studies around the world, the phone provides a ‘lifeline’ for relationships amid increasing transnational and regional migration (Kamwesiga et al., 2017; Ahlin, 2018; Madianou and Miller, 2012), offering the ‘perpetual opportunity’ of connection and ‘co-presence’ (Miller et al, 2021), sometimes beneficial and sometimes unwelcome. The primary use of phones amongst participants in Lusozi is to keep in contact with family, those within the household and older relatives at home, via phone calls. In a survey of 195 respondents’ previous three phone calls, a total of 585 calls, 95 respondents (49%) had made or received at least one phone call, with a total of 135 calls (24%), simply for the purpose of checking on the caller or receiver, and their family; “I was checking on how the kids are”, “to find out how he was doing”, “she was checking on me”. 122 calls (21%) were for seeking or sending “help”, money or sometimes food; “he wanted me to help him”, “she called to send money home to my sister”. Thanks to phone calls, continuity in relationships between family and friends can be maintained over distances, offering a sense of ‘connected presence’, with conversations a sign of a bond and obligation; as Licoppe
argues, perhaps the content is less significant than the fact of calling itself (Licoppe, 2004, p. 141).

Mobile money is also used almost universally by participants. This is often lauded as an example of adaptation of technology to requirements ‘from below’ (Pype, K., 2017), offering flexible banking and remittances (Kusimba et al., 2016: 266; Maurer, 2012: 589). Economic anthropologist Bill Maurer argues that mobile money defies ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ analyses, instead revealing the networked relations between ‘human and technological, top and bottom, producer and consumer, person and commodity’ (Maurer, 2012, p. 600). This includes the vast institutional networks of mobile money, existing ‘complex ecologies of money and relationships’, as well as the new networks and business opportunities it makes available (Maurer, 2012, p. 600). With 33 mobile money vendors in Lusozi alone, as introduced in chapter 3, it is often the most convenient way to store and send money. As shown in the short film about mobile money in chapter 3, people sending money typically take cash to an agent at a kiosk, who arranges the transfer to the recipient’s phone number via their mobile, taking a small commission for themselves. Various people in Lusozi explained how they provide for their parents and relatives in the village without visiting them as “you can send money on the phone”. As one woman explained, if she wasn’t sending her parents money, they would have nothing. Recently, her mother had a stomach ulcer, so she sent her money to go to hospital. And from the perspective of an elder in the village, “life’s easier now with phones”, as they are able to communicate family problems with relatives in the city and ‘mobilise’ the necessary funds.

Norms of generosity can be hard for people to fulfil (Ferguson, 2015, p. 77), particularly with the increased convenience of requesting assistance thanks to phones. Owiny is 48 years old and has acted as a local councillor (LC1) in Lusozi Godown for 5 years. He says he’s always busy, with people bringing their problems to him. The majority of the work, which his wife Ada also assists with, is mediating neighbourhood or domestic disputes. People will come to them with a family issue, and they bring them together, sit them down to try to resolve it. They estimate this happens about three times a week. The work is almost entirely voluntary, except for a monthly stipend of UGX 10,000 (£2.10), which inevitably, is spent on airtime. He also covers the costs of data required to have continued access the ‘neighbourhood watch’ WhatsApp group at his own expense, as well as the cost of hosting and assisting people who come to Lusozi looking for their relatives. He said his motivation to do the work is to help people and to gain their respect, which they show to him by trusting him to help solve their problems. He finds that the main challenge older people in the area face is being left with responsibility for their grandchildren; with young
men unable to earn money, when girls get pregnant, they end up bringing the child back to their parents. As older people they “struggle to handle the responsibility”, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapter 6. Like many other participants, he finds that some people still take care of their parents as they become old, but “it depends on their heart”. Himself, he takes care of his mother who is in her eighties. He had brought her to live with him in Lusozi, but she preferred to be in her own home in the village. He says she’s very happy there, and still productive; “you will find her with even young people queueing to buy her cassava”. His sister is there taking daily care of her, whilst he provides for them financially. He bought his sister a smartphone in order to make communication easier between them. He finds the connectivity has actually made life a bit harder for him, as it has increased his obligation to people at home. When they have problems, they can immediately let him know and he’s expected to find money for them. Before, even news of a death could take a week to reach him, by which time he might have even missed the burial. He feels mobile phones have intensified his commitments to others, by reducing the time it takes for him to receive bad news and requests. He joked,

Owiny: It is now easier [to communicate]. Only that it is bad for us who are of old age.
In the past, I can lose my sister, and, in a week, I get the information, "oh you know your sister died last week",
Ada: You go even when they’re buried…
Owiny: When they’re buried, but now, slight problem, you are aware of it. So, it disturbs, you don’t have money now, [laughs]… nowadays, the problem comes, everybody’s aware…nowadays no dodging!

In a survey of 50 people’s phone use, only three people said they had not used mobile money in the past six months. Those who had used it sent and received money 3 times a month on average. We asked the about the last three times they had sent or received mobile money, who the person was, the amount and reason for remitting. Of 130 recorded remittances, the average amount sent was just over 200,000 UGX (£40), ranging from as little as 10,000 to 10,000,000 UGX (£2 - £2000). Mostly, remittances were sent or received by siblings (28%), parents (12%), friends (11%), and customers (10%). Sometimes people had deposited money for themselves, using mobile money as their bank. The greatest proportion of remittances (28%) were for ‘help’, which could include money for upkeep, food, ‘pocket money’ or gifts. This was followed by remittances for health purposes (25%), which could include hospital bills, medicine, transport to hospital and surgery costs, for example, “my brother sent me to buy medicine when I was not working yet”; “to transport my sister to hospital”; “I sent money to my grandmother for food as
she was sick”. Six of these transfers were received or forwarded by the respondent in a chain of remittances, for the purposes of supporting older relatives. For example, one respondent had received UGX 200,000 (£40) from her daughter, in order to help her take her mother in the village to hospital; or another, who received UGX 30,000 (£6.20) from their Aunt for their grandmother’s hospital bills. This can be understood as ‘informal mHealth’ (Hampshire et al., 2021, 2017, 2015), the informal and strategic ways people use mobile phones for health-related purposes, expanded in the following chapter on health and care.

Despite generational shifts, economic change and increasingly ‘scattered families’ (Coe, 2014; Sigona et al., 2015, p. 131), mobile money remittances mean that relatives can work together to ensure that the older generation are cared for. Phones are therefore central to up-holding arrangements and delegating responsibilities for care amongst families split up over long distances and periods of time. For example, Alimo Judith is 40 years old and has been selling charcoal in Godown for 13 years. She’s originally from Gulu and moved here in 1995 to get married. When she first arrived, she thought “wow! this place is better than the village” due to its proximity to the market and hospitals - but she has since learned that “life is not easier in Kampala” as it requires constant work and money. Her mother, brother and sister still live in the village. Her mother has her own business, selling food stored in her granary in June, when there’s no rain and people are struggling to grow their own. In June, when her mother is making money, she sends it to Alimo Judith via mobile money to pay her school fees, as they’re due at this time. Later, in September, Alimo Judith is able to pay her back so she can buy food when her stores are empty again. By splitting their household, the mother and daughter are able to support each other’s businesses through annual cycles of cash flow. It is only Alimo Judith who is able to support her mum with money when she needs it for medicine. “She calls me, I send money or go myself so she can go to hospital”. Sometimes, Alimo Judith calls her mother, asking “are you badly off?”. Alimo Judith is preparing to return to the village herself when her kids finish school. She can then leave her youngest in the hands of her eldest children, so hopes she will be able to leave soon. This mutual support can be considered a ‘reconfigured family repertoire’; whilst it may be an ‘imperfect replacement’ (Coe, 2014, p. 59), the possibility of convenient contact and money transfer facilitates retirement in rural areas and ensure that older people’s material and health needs can be catered for. This can also intensify the obligations of people in the city to provide for family at home (de Bruijn et al., 2009), as expanded in chapter 7 on cooperation and money.
Younger people in Lusozi also evidently help their parents to access news and networks, music and entertainment via their phone. A few older people explained how their sons would collect music for them from one of the three vendors in the area, such as Alimo Judith whose son shows her videos of gospel music, and Nakito whose son brings her Baganda music. Customers bring or buy a memory card or ‘flash’ and choose which genre they prefer for the vendor to download from Google. They pay UGX 200 (£0.04) per song or can buy a bundle of 5 songs for UGX 1,000 (£0.20). The vendors try to keep up to date with the latest options on the program and play the music from their sound system to attract customers. As one vendor explained, “people come, especially guys who are current…they get interest from outside and they know what they want”. Older customers are “quite rare…they come once in a while looking for old songs”, such as gospel music, Lingala, or traditional Acholi music, “it makes them happy”. As in Pype’s analysis of older people and popular media in Kinshasha (Pype, 2017), in an urban environment where entertainment often targets youth, older people can reconnect with contemporary society through their knowledge of earlier music. In the case where younger relatives, sons, nephews and grandsons, are responsible for choosing music and collecting it on flash disks for their families, parents and older relatives are included in ‘dotcom’ circulations of music and entertainment. The music thus travels across generations and media platforms; the radio, the search engine, the vendor’s hard drive, the flash drives and mobile phone, the sound system playing on the street and in people’s homes. Whilst spanning these spaces and material and digital processes, the content (re)produces shared social meanings and forges connections.

Although Omara and Kilongeni recognise these advantages of mobiles phones, like many others, they have concerns about younger people’s use of smartphones. Omara imitated young men always looking at their phone, having to charge it up to three times a day, compared with his own ‘button’, which only needs charging once a week, “If I'm a bit alone at home, I just put it in the ear from here and I can get the music which can entertain me - but I don't keep on disturbing the phone every time!” Kilongeni has the same concerns about his sons spending too much time on their phones and being distracted from their surroundings. He tries to regulate their use, advising them to avoid pornographic images and addiction to their phones.

I would rather advise them and that is always what I do… when children come back home, they have all their time on screen…for you the father, you don't care whether the pictures they show there are horrors or there is something pornographic… you say urgh! after all this is the city, and that is not good… You regulate how the screen should be used… Like I always tell them, I don't like receiving phone calls at night unless it's very
serious, it is very important and then the way you use your phone should not be an addiction...Like am sorry to refer to Smiley [pointing at his youngest son in the room], now he's on headsets, he doesn't know he is in this environment.

As shown in the ‘Global Smartphone’ (Miller et al., 2021), fears about smartphone addiction and detachment from others are widely held around the world. Whilst the rhetoric about the potential dangers of smartphone use, as something ‘addictive, unnatural or harmful’, is pervasive, it is then informed by particular contextual values in different places (Sutton, 2020). In Lusozi, fears around the digital are often informed by broader intergenerational tensions, with older people like Kilongeni and Omara differentiating their own phone use from that of their (grand)children. Other older people in Lusozi shared Kilongeni’s perspective on mobile phones and their impact on the younger generation through exposure to ‘strange’ things like pornography. For example, Denny, a policeman, and his wife both worry that young people go out and “copy” the pornography they find on TV and the internet on their smartphones. This comes with concerns about excess, misinformation, a loss of tradition and respect, with a damaging impact on younger people and in turn their elders.

As shown in the sections to follow, this narrative is also reflected and fuelled by political and popular discourses. This section initially focuses on increasing political restrictions on social media, including the recently imposed social media or ‘OTT’ tax, and the opposition and protests provoked in response. The use of social media amongst older participants is then detailed to demonstrate its’ productive potential, in contrast with this dominant political narrative, which publicly regards social media as a waste of time and resources. Alongside the ethnographic implications of the political regulation of social media, it is interesting to theoretically consider Illich’s earlier concept of the phone as a ‘convivial tool’, a social device which inherently allows for autonomous action undefined by bureaucrats, but which also has the potential to be used for interference, manipulation or control (Illich, 1973, p. 19). Illich’s idea of conviviality as “individual freedom realized in personal interdependence” (ibid, p. 12), with ‘convivial tools’ opening up opportunities for connection and self-realisation (ibid), also informs Nyamnjoh’s work, which has been influential in the approach to sociality in this thesis. This ‘convivial’ framework thus unites the research context, the use of phones and the anthropological approach, which we will return to in the conclusion.
Taxing Olugambo (Gossip)

As introduced in chapter 2, in 2018, President Museveni argued that social media promotes ‘fake news’, misinformation, witchcraft accusations, pornography and addiction; an ‘over the top’ (OTT) excess. According to the President, social media is a luxury (Namasinga Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 382) used only for ‘olugambo’ or ‘gossip’, and “we need resources to cope with the consequences of their lugambo”. This justified the introduction of the ‘OTT tax’ on social media use, a levy collected by telecommunications companies of UGX 200 ($0.05) per day, or UGX 6,000 (£1.20) per month for using various social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Skype and LinkedIn. When the tax was implemented in July 2018, it prompted a drop in social media usage, with a drop of 2.5 million internet subscriptions and 1.2 million social media users in the subsequent three months (Namasinga Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 392). Six of 50 respondents to a survey of phone use in Godown reported that they no longer use social media to avoid paying the tax, and 22 said that they found other people are less responsive on social media due to the tax. As one 62-year-old grandmother said, who previously used her phone to talk to her daughters in the village on WhatsApp, “instead of
paying tax, I can buy sugar for the children”. This reveals the impact of the tax on social media access, likely to disproportionately affect low-income people, especially older people with many responsibilities and less technical savvy to navigate the restrictions, for example through VPN access. Whilst ICTs offer the potential for free expression and access to information, they are also embedded in existing relations, emphasising the ‘social determinism of technology’ (Namasinga, Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 384); dotcom domesticated.

The introduction of the OTT tax in particular provoked various petitions and campaigns, including social media campaigns such as #ThisTaxMustGo. And since then, further policies have been imposed\textsuperscript{bis}, including the requirement that all blogs are authorised by the UCC, blocks on internet access during elections, and an on-going Facebook ban; what has been termed ‘digital authoritarianism’ (Namasinga, Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 394). Protests, led by opposition leader and “spokesman for Uganda’s frustrated youth”, Bobi Wine, dominated headlines in Uganda and attracted international attention. Bobi Wine, whose success is linked to social media (Namasinga, Selnes and Orgeret, 2020, p. 393), frequently draws on social media as a platform for the emancipation of the younger generation, particularly from the ageing President and older political elite. This invokes the ‘dotcom discourse’ and its intergenerational implications on a broader political scale, as mapped out ethnographically in this chapter, showing how these conversations are intersubjectively informed. As reported in the Ugandan national newspaper the Daily Monitor, his audio response to the age limit resolution in September went viral on social media, and concluded with a direct address to “my fellow Ugandans especially the younger generation”:

“Now to you my fellow Ugandans especially the younger generation; […] Let us make use of social media and this modern technology to emancipate ourselves because THE TIME IS NOW.”\textsuperscript{bxx}

Bobi appeals emphatically to ‘this modern technology’ as a dynamic communication tool of the younger generation. In both the content and placement of this speech, social media is positioned as a space to ridicule ‘inactive’ rulers, a platform for the emancipation of the young through a direct transition away from the old. Discourses on increasing internet and social media access thus locate anxieties around broader social changes, their impact on intergenerational relationships, and the experiences of older people. In many ways, as Bobi suggests, mobile phones and social media have allowed people to overcome the limits of state bureaucracy (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2012b, p. 12). The versatile ‘convivial’ potential of these communication
tools (Illich, 1973), and the need for them, is further credited by the increasing impositions of the state on phone use such as the social media tax. As well as the OTT tax, the Ugandan government introduced an additional mobile money tax of 1% on deposit and withdrawal. At the time, the UCC found that people’s mobile money balances significantly dropped at a national level, with many mobile money vendors in Lusozi reporting that they had 30% fewer customers each month. Some of them found that people were using different means to transport money, including boarding the bus to transport larger sums if the fare was cheaper than the tax. 20 respondents said they reduced their mobile money use or stopped completely. But mostly, they said that they still send mobile money in the same way since the imposition of the tax. “It’s stressing me but nothing to do”.

Ethnographic findings related to social media use amongst participants in Lusozi suggest that it is used for more than ‘olugambo’, which is itself more than fruitless. For many, it has now become a basic need, rather than a ‘luxury’. For example, researchers have found that phones are a “lifeline” for people who have experienced strokes in Uganda, allowing them to navigate everyday life and connect with their families (Kamwesiga et al., 2017). As Tanja Ahlin notes in her study of migrant families’ care of elders through ICTs, phone practices are “not only about communication, just as remittances are not only about sending money”(Ahlin, 2018). What are “over the top” platforms used for other than olugambo? And what can olugambo offer, particularly to older people? This is considered in the section to follow on the use of social media, specifically WhatsApp and Facebook.

**Social Media Use**

WhatsApp is widely used and is often synonymous with the ‘internet’ or the ‘smartphone’ itself, suggesting that it is one of the factors that has encouraged the widespread adoption of smartphones (Shambare, 2014). This reflects the cost efficiency, simplicity and user friendliness of WhatsApp, making it a practical tool for communication (ibid). Large WhatsApp groups for information sharing are common, for example in neighbourhoods or amongst service professions. In Angamalonyi, there are regular messages sent on the WhatsApp group. Almost every week, the Chairwoman updates the group photo with the week’s beneficiary and her two honorary members in their dresses. Other photos of people enjoying the party are also sent. Updates about members are shared, for example if they give birth to a child or lose a relative. Recently, a member lost her daughter, so the Chairwoman announced the fundraising to take
place at her home that afternoon. They also update with group proceedings, as well as more regularly sending news items, jokes and celebratory wishes.

The Chairwoman's brother in Gulu in northern Uganda is part of a council WhatsApp Group, for which he is able to access Airtel data funded by the municipality at a reduced price. This helps him to find out about council health sensitisation sessions and mobilise the community to attend. WhatsApp groups are thus used as platforms for information sharing; “they bring news”. For example, when the OTT tax was announced, the speed at which the news spread to 15,000 WhatsApp users made national news. As one 40-year-old man explained;

Now almost everyone has what they call groups, friends’ groups, all these, it could be work groups, these groups are there. And these groups, there is ever information that keeps coming around, like what you heard about the [OTT] tax, it went around the country in 10 minutes. 15,000 recipients received the message. If anything that seems to be relevant and effecting the life of people directly, the messages tend to go very fast.

Often, these news circulations are health related. In the case of a disease management, such as a recent cholera outbreak in Lusozi, the Ministry of Health sent radio and TV announcements, as well as text messages to people in affected areas, which were then further circulated on WhatsApp. At the government hospital, all of the staff are part of a WhatsApp group where announcements are made. Each department has a smaller WhatsApp group where people can let each other know if they’re going to miss work, give updates about patients and medical supplies. Or as one 50-year-old electrician told me, “in that group of mine, one is a teacher, one is a Doctor...so any information one of them gets, I have to get it here”. A 48-year-old woman told me she had “learnt so much” about health from WhatsApp, for example how to check for breast cancer and nutritional information. Another older man also learned about the health benefits of beetroot and bananas through his WhatsApp group and has started eating more of them.

Family WhatsApp groups can support the distribution of tasks related to supporting older relatives. Obalo, the VC of RATO, is 62 years old. Obalo’s four roomed, self-contained home, which costs him UGX 400,000 (£83) per month, sits behind a gate with an eskari (security guard) in Lusozi. He comes from a family of four sons who have all had successful businesses and careers, affording their independence. However, they still make an effort to come together for family meetings every few months. At those meetings, the older people advise the younger generation, particularly those who are recently married and who have young children and are
therefore most in need of guidance. His family use their WhatsApp group for organising the meetings and for sharing news, good and bad, or for asking for assistance and fundraising. Family further afield or without smartphones can be called to be updated, as shown in the following transcript;

We have [WhatsApp] groups for RATO, and a family group and that can give me trace of what’s happening….the messages are so frequent, because today I received this [shows photo of grandson in school uniform on his first day] and tomorrow I might receive another. Another is that if we have programs like wedding, graduations, we usually inform them very early so that they can contribute….For both good and bad. Like if there is a problem maybe far, we have people over there and we call them and let them know and they also tell us what’s going on….I call them every week because I need to find out what’s going on. Like now I have an uncle who is sick, and I need to call and find out if he’s okay…I usually send using mobile money and if someone is very sick, we try as hard as possible to send a representative or go there by yourself.

Care tasks can be delegated across distances amongst siblings and cousins via phones, through calls to check on them, through family WhatsApp groups, or through mobile money transfers.

Beyond supporting families and existing networks, social media is also used by older people in Lusozí to seek new friends and broaden their social networks. Facebook is commonly used for this purpose. Some people we spoke with in Lusozí use Facebook on their smartphones to search, add and chat with new friends. Some of them attribute it to ‘friendliness’, enjoying making contact with new people and chatting to them. A few also see it as an opportunity to network and learn from people. Opoka is 48 years old and has had a smartphone for five years. He uses Facebook to talk to old friends and look for new ones. He especially likes finding international people, sending photos and sometimes exchanging phone numbers. He likes ‘learning from them’, “when a new face appears, we’re eager to talk to them”. Opio Joseph, the 39-year-old secretary of RATO, also accepts or sends requests on Facebook, “creating friends worldwide...you see their photos, if you like some and want to make friends...to take you to a higher level.” Again, he wouldn’t meet them in person, and generally loses contact eventually, “like one in Spain we used to chat a lot, but my phone got stolen so we lost contact”. Frederick is only 33 but also sometimes likes to find new friends on Facebook by sending requests or receiving them. They are ‘outside Uganda and all over the world’. He said, “I like chatting to new people and meeting friends. I like people and being friends”. Namubiru is a 45-year-old market
vendor. She has old friends she connects to on Facebook, but also is sometimes looking for new friends. Her kids even look for new friends for her. Usually they are ‘from here’, women or families. She’s never seen them in person, it’s ‘just to make friends’, like families sometimes can’t come ‘live’ or in person so they connect on the phone. Her kids can call them, and they chat, just asking them how they are; they always want to find out how her mother is. Nakito, who shares her smartphone with her son, uses Facebook to look up friends, add them and send messages. Mostly they are other women who live in Uganda. She would never meet with them but just chats to pass the time.

Findings on the use of WhatsApp and Facebook portray the potential productivity of social media and ‘olugambo’, particularly for older participants; to keep in touch with families despite distance, to re-establish and co-ordinate community groups, to provide financial and personal care, and to seek friends and business networks around the world. This shows how technology, whilst differentially accessed, can ‘make movement possible’, encouraging mobility and encounters. A tax on social media and mobile money transfers can also therefore be interpreted as a tax on all of the possibilities of ‘digital capital’, portraying how political narratives and directives can impose themselves in everyday lives, and between the older and younger generations.

**Conclusion**

Often, ethnographies of phones, documenting how they are perceived and domesticated (Horst and Miller, 2006, p. 7), find that they can accommodate continuity in social life (Miller, D. et al., 2016, p. 7). This is evident here in the ways phone use is embedded in long-standing social roles and practices, for example in the use of phone calls and mobile money transfers to support older relatives at a distance in line with elder care norms, or in the exacerbation of existing inequities related to gender and income. At the same time, there is an understandable propensity for people to perceive mobile phones as ‘highly significant agents of change’ (Vokes, 2018, p. 276). In Lusozi, people would often say that “mobile phones have brought the world together”, which could refer to an expansion of home, or encounters with the wider world. People can seek new friends and connections on Facebook, find out news from around the world, and easily keep in touch with relatives at home. As identified by anthropologists Nyamnjoh and de Bruijn (de Bruijn et al., 2009), these ‘compressed distances’ have brought new social possibilities and pressures. Economic migrants, such as many of the research participants in Lusozi, face
heightened expectations for regular contact and remittances to relatives in their home village (ibid, p.16).

Access to social media via smartphones is considered by some participants to be corrupting younger people and cooperative ways of life. The findings here suggest that phones are incorporated in more dynamic social trajectories, being embedded in pre-existing networks and discourses, re-establishing them and at the same time having the capacity to transform them (Vokes and Pype, 2018); they reflect and influence “relationships, encounters and interconnections” (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2012b, p. 2) and in turn people’s sense of identity and belonging (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2012b, p. 10). As Porter et al put it in their 2015 study of intergenerational relations and the phone in Africa, with connection to relatives and their resources across distances, there is “an increasingly sophisticated reconfiguration and re-imagining of family networks, in which new types of cohesion exist alongside old continuities” (Porter et al., 2015, p. 41). Phone ownership and sharing represents distributed social status and access to resources, as in Acen’s neighbours refusal to lend their phone; phone calls or exchanging numbers can be symbolic acknowledgement of a relationships in themselves; mobile money transfers offer practical assistance and show care and respect, up-holding family roles; music downloads can encourage the inclusion of older people in contemporary popular culture, as Nakito’s son does for her. The phone thus focuses a lens onto kinship trajectories, which is particularly sharpened in consideration of elder care and intergenerational relationships.

The information contained within the phone can establish further grounding for more general observations around intergenerational morality in Lusozi. For example, what is the role of a grandparent in Lusozi on a day-to-day basis, as evident in their call list? How is a younger person expected to assist their elders with and through their phone use, and are they meeting these expectations? These questions continue to be discussed in subsequent chapters; in chapter 6 on health and care and in chapter 7 on cooperation and public morality. The chapters continue to outline observations grounded in cited stories, dialogue, and in open-ended questions, acknowledging the ever-incompleteness of co-constructed knowledge about social realities. Like the phone, anthropology as a ‘convivial tool’ can retain a sufficient openness to accommodate and even seek to broaden the complex possibilities of social life (Illich, 1973; Jackson, 2012, p. 175; Nowicka and Vertovec, 2014, p. 343), which is particularly applicable in diverse African contexts like Lusozi (Nyamnjoh, 2012). The next chapter is built specifically around the question, ‘who is responsible for older people’s health and care?’, reflecting the idea that it is a question people negotiate and discuss; politically, institutionally and at home. Documenting these
discussions can expose ways people seek to gain certainty in an ambiguous world, particularly when ambiguity is exacerbated by globally threatened elder care norms, long-term illness, economic crises and age itself.
Chapter 6

Health & Care: who is responsible?

Introduction

Who is responsible for the health and care of older people? This question reflects the way that elder care is socially negotiated, something that people ‘wonder about’ and debate, in interpersonal and public conversations. It is often answered by families, adapting their roles and routines in times of sickness (Kleinman, 2015). The question implicates the gendered dimensions of care, with daughters typically responsible for daily support at home, and sons for providing financial assistance (Gertrude et al., 2019; MacNeil, 1996; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1991). It incorporates the many responsibilities of health workers, mitigating shortages in the health system and sometimes providing informal support through their personal phones (Hampshire et al., 2021, 2017). Older people living in Lusozi also have many responsibilities for themselves, their children and grandchildren, and their neighbours, as ‘active and resourceful’ givers and recipients of care (Whyte and Whyte, 2004, p. 90). Many said they aspire to physical and financial independence in later life in order to avoid being a burden on their children. And as we saw in chapter 4, sharing responsibilities eases pressure on individuals, with “interdependence as insurance against the risk of dependence” (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261).

As shown throughout the thesis so far, this ideal of ‘togetherness’ or distributed responsibility is felt by participants and researchers alike to be undermined by “westernization”, principles of individualism increasingly distributed in the dotcom era and urban environment, weakening intergenerational obligations. In this way, studies of elder care can offer a lens onto how broad global processes are intimately experienced and embodied (Buch, 2015b). The role of the global in elder health and care was also explicitly observed by many participants in this research, including both older people and health workers. An awareness of care norms in other contexts both disrupts and re-establishes existing ideals of home-based intergenerational support systems (Coe, C., 2020); care homes in the US and Europe are widely disparaged, whilst health workers in Lusozi hospital aspire to provide the specialised geriatric services they have seen in Korea and China. The relatively recent emergence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, strokes, ulcers, cancer and mental illness as widespread – and often co-morbid - health problems in Uganda (Whyte, 2016) is closely related by health researchers and participants alike to ‘dotcom’ lifestyles, migration, stressors and diets in the city. As NCDs disproportionately affect older people, particularly those living in urban areas (Nankwanga, A.
Neema, S., 2020, p. 82), this chapter will include a focus on care routines and understandings of chronic NCDs. In particular, many older participants have hypertension or ‘pressure’, often attributed to environmental and lifestyle factors, including the ‘pressure’ of financial stress, work and care responsibilities in old age, an economic phenomenon managed through personal strategies.

The ethnographic focus on embodied experiences of global socio-economic factors draws from literature in critical medical anthropology on ageing and care (Buch, 2015; Han, 2012; Fassin, 2009; Kehr, J., 2018; Kleinman, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2017) by ethnographically exposing the lived ‘intersection between the macro and the intimate’ (Kehr, J., 2018, p. 3). Articulated experiences of life at the intersection are specific to the individual participants in this research, situated in the historical context of Lusozi. However, participants also actively reflect on how this uncertainty represents and cuts across a worldwide context of economic insecurity and disintegrating public services, the increasing neoliberal economisation of life, wellbeing and care, and the corrosive impact this is having on established relational values (Fassin, 2009; Han, 2012; Kehr, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017). This locates uncertainties around health in older age within the broader socio-economic context, where it is otherwise increasingly individualised and medicalised. As Nguyen et al put it in their analysis of ‘Global Care Chain’ literature, care is part of a situated moral discourse as well as ‘the neoliberal project’, which promotes self-determination and self-care in ‘the face of growing precarity and widespread uncertainties, conditions that are stripping away the very possibilities for self-determination for most’ (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 206). They argue that this represents the “broadest moral contradiction, ambivalence and hybridity of our social and political world today” (ibid, p. 199). This chapter therefore seeks to contribute to this theorising on the political dimensions of care by locating the “[c]oexistence of local and global ideas about aging and care on which young and elderly people draw to survive and maintain relationships in shifting political economic conditions” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 206). The ambiguity between the intimate and economic is further illustrated in chapter 7, which outlines the “deeply moralizing” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 200) dimensions of pervasive neoliberal market logics, otherwise often critiqued as ‘amoral’ (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989; Nguyen et al., 2017; Zelizer, 2018; Hart, 2005).

The chapter is structured around the various levels of care, starting with the public health system and then shifting towards family and self-care. It opens with ethnographic insights about Lusozi hospital and the health system in Uganda. I spent two months observing consultations in the physiotherapy ward, where often older people would often visit with attendant relatives to learn
how to manage chronic health problems and injuries. Sometimes consultations were in Luganda, sometimes in English, sometimes both. The hospital staff were supportive of my project, sharing knowledge with me openly and pointing out interesting cases. With surgery costs often being unattainable, the physiotherapists are responsible for helping people to manage their injuries and continue working; the most common health problems they treat are back related due to the “nature of work”, as discussed in chapter 3. I also interviewed health workers from departments across the hospital, as the people most broadly exposed to the health concerns of older people and the services available to them.

The health system includes medical, religious, social, ritual, digital and herbal approaches to health and healing, which can be sought “simultaneously and sequentially” (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 113). Seeking health advice from multiple sources reflects an intersubjective (Jackson, 1998b) and pragmatic engagement with the uncertainty caused by ill health (Whyte, 1997). Susan Whyte, a medical anthropologist who has worked extensively on chronic illness in Uganda, argues that conversation with others can be the only way to seek guidance and control within an ambiguous world; in terms of sickness and seeking prevention, cause and cure (Whyte, 1997, p. 27). This means that the dialogue, idioms, morals, stories and patterns that are used to express health problems reveal perspectives and shared meanings (Whyte, 1997, p. 25). For Whyte, it is ‘the task of ethnography’ to detail and explain these patterns (ibid), and how they might reinforce or occasionally undermine social relations and institutions. This is reflected in the subsequent sections on routines and conversations around care for older people, particularly those with chronic long-term illnesses like ‘pressure’ or hypertension. Intersubjectivity emphasises the significance of dialogue and of reality as relational. Elder care for chronic NCDs is conceivably one of the narrowest and most personal intersections at which to ethnographically observe intersubjectivity between particular and universal, and the interpersonal arrangements intended to mitigate related uncertainties (Jackson, 1998b; Whyte, 1997). This has been termed the ‘biopolitics of care’ (Buch, 2015b, p. 280; Fassin, 2009), or the ‘local biologies of ageing’, where the physical and social interact and determine experiences of ageing (Lock, 1994; Livingston, 2003).
Health context

In Lusozi, there are extensive health services available, including six private health clinics, five pharmacies, a regional government hospital, and various herbal and traditional healers in close proximity. The private clinics are close by and considered good quality, generally open 24-hours a day, providing outpatient consultations and medicines as well as limited in-patient services. Most of them are run by doctors or senior nurses who also have positions in the government hospitals in the capital. The clinicians, older participants and health workers we met said that older patients tend to go to the government hospital in Lusozi, as it is only a 10-minute walk from Godown, their services are mostly free except for some medicines and surgical supplies, and because they have known the institution for longer. Lusozi Hospital was built in 2012 with a donation of $8 million from China, cited as one of the instances of Chinese philanthropy in Uganda amid much commercial interest (Warmerdam, Ward; Van Dijk, Meine Pieter., 2016). What was a small, trusted community health centre is now a regional referral hospital with 100 in-patient beds and 365 staff. In 2019, 104,010 outpatients were treated, significantly fewer than in the previous year, as three other regional hospitals opened in Kampala to relieve growing pressure on hospitals in the capital.

According to many participants and health workers, Lusozi hospital provisions are lacking for older people in particular. This is a major concern that was indicated by the physiotherapists I worked with, as well as other health workers, including hospital administrators. For example, Nakyanzi, a senior hospital administrator, feels that the health system in which she works needs to have “better provisions for these [older] people”. With the ‘youthful population’ in Uganda, she finds that health policy and funding often forget older people, which she feels needs to be rectified as the older population grows. Nakyanzi was inspired by the geriatric care for older people that she observed on a recent training course in South Korea, which highlighted for her the gaps in Ugandan policies for older people’s health care. Without specialized geriatric services, older people experiencing multi-morbidity need to seek specialist care from various departments; as Nakyanzi put it, they come to the hospital with multiple conditions and have to “roam around” for all the services they’re referred to, with long queues at each department, “they’re lining up around the hospital”.

Many older participants’ narrated experiences in the hospital confirmed Nakyanzi’s account, with common complaints about the poor quality of services due to stock outs, delays, costs and health
worker apathy. These complaints suggest that the hospital and the health system more broadly is thought to be falling short of their responsibilities for people’s health and care. These quotations are representative of many similar responses: “The hospital is very bad; they want money and are very lazy to work. They don’t care.”; “You go and line up. You go in the morning at 8, even at this time [in the evening] you still haven’t got your medicine...”. Two elderly women in their eighties separately explained how they now refuse to go to the hospital at all, as they have been turned away from the queue in the past, being told by a nurse that their health problems were “just old age”; “most of the doctors are so proud...when they see those old people, they stop them on the way and tell them ‘you people go home and wait for your day’”. As the head physiotherapist explained, people think of “ageing as a normal thing, they don’t understand the other issues come in that need to be taken care of as medical issues. They say ‘pain is just old age’”. This expression is also cited in Nankwanga and Neema’s qualitative research with people over the age of 60 across multiple regions in Uganda, where some participants had been told that pain is “just old age”, denied treatment and later deterred from seeking it (Nankwanga, A. Neema, S., 2020, p. 84). Other studies on the accessibility of public healthcare in Uganda confirm that older people can be overlooked and side-lined by health workers and the health infrastructure more broadly (Droti, 2014; Mulumba et al., 2014; Schatz et al., 2018), where they may already face poverty, political marginalization and a range of health problems (Mulumba et al., 2014; Nankwanga, A. Neema, S., 2020; Wandera et al., 2015).

Figure 6.1. Health workers preparing to administer vaccinations in Lusozi hospital. Photo by Charlotte Hawkins.
Typically, older participants in Lusozi were clear that they did not blame the health workers, or even the hospital, for resource shortages and lacking services, instead seeing it as part of the wider health system in Uganda, saying for example: “I also sympathise with the Doctors, they handle too many people”; “It is no mistake by us or medical personnel – it is a problem facing the hospital and us”. Senior doctors at the hospital earn a maximum of 2.6 million UGX (£510) per month. Hospital human resources staff explained that these comparatively low salaries in the government sector (the average national salary for doctors is around 6,000,000 UGX or £1,200 per month) meant that, at the time of the research, various positions were still open at the hospital, particularly at senior consultancy level. However, despite that, the hospital has three senior consultants and eight consultants, significantly more than most rural regional referral hospitals, where the salaries are generally lower. There are also: 11 medical officers’ special grade (trained with a master’s specialism), 10 medical officers (trained at University), 17 clinical officers (with diplomas) and various ‘allied health professionals’ (including dentists, therapists, eye specialists, lab staff, pharmacists and a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine or TCM). Nurses form the bulk of the 365 staff members, with 37 nursing officers, 40 enrolled nurses and 20 nursing assistants.

To supplement their income, health workers often run their own private practice, taking time away from their jobs in the hospital. They may also act as unofficial brokers for outsourced supplies. 60-year-old Omara is therefore savvy when it comes to seeking guidance from health practitioners in government hospitals. He knows there may be a financial incentive for the health worker to prescribe certain checks, routines or medications. He first calls one of the medics that he knows, friends that he went to school with when he was young. He then goes to the hospital armed with this advice. Based on what they tell him, he will then go to another hospital in Kampala, but he will not share the previous diagnosis, “let me step up and try another hospital… now the doctor will start afresh with me to compare”. This means that he can then read between the lines, taking responsibility to determine the best way forward for his own health.

Omara’s approach depicts a relational yet self-sufficient strategy for seeking health care and information. Through dialogue with various friends and health workers, Omara attains independence in his capacity to take care of himself. As with Omara, phone calls with trusted friends or relatives, particularly health workers, are often the first-place older people seek health advice, followed by the hospital. Despite the “globalizing, hegemonic force of biomedicine” (Hampshire and Owusu, 2013, p. 248), many participants explained how they may also seek
healing elsewhere, through prayer, indigenous methods and herbs. For example, someone with a health problem may go for prayers and medical advice, and if that fails, then go to an herbalist or spiritual healer. Concurrent approaches to health and care within Lusozi, in the hospital, in the Church or Mosque, in the herbalist’s homes, or on the phone, reflect a holistic concept of health and wellbeing and a practical engagement with uncertainty related to health and sickness (Whyte, 1997), which can have diverse yet overlapping explanations and solutions. This depicts the complex ‘continuum’ of healing (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 145), a fluidity which is actively drawn on by service users and their providers in what can be understood as a ‘pluralistic therapeutic approach’, through which various approaches are sought “simultaneously and sequentially” (ibid, p. 113).

This section briefly outlines relevant aspects of the Ugandan health system, particularly as it pertains to older people’s health. This sought to focus not simply on ‘gaps’ in the system, but on how participant’s – health workers and older people living in Lusozi – mitigate them. This mitigation is further illustrated in the following sections, first on ‘informal’ phone practices amongst hospital staff, followed by sections on family care and self-care practices. ‘Informal mHealth’ is an important aspect of hospital services, and has recently been found to be a “large-scale emergent health system” in and of itself (Hampshire et al., 2021, 2017). This ethnography seeks to contribute to existing studies on the various creative and informal ways phones are appropriated for health provision around the world (Anstey Watkins et al., 2018; Hampshire et al., 2017; Ling et al., 2020; Mars and Scott, 2017), in line with recommendations regarding the need to examine these practices before building ‘formal’ mHealth approaches (Hampshire et al., 2021). The phone allows service users and providers to navigate the health system on a day-to-day basis and in ways which are appropriate to an intersubjective ‘continuum’ of care. This builds on evidence in the previous chapter about how the phone can be responsive to specific contextual needs and appropriated accordingly, particularly with regards to health-related issues. This also reflects the approach taken in the applied aspect of the ASSA project, in which all researchers contributed ethnographic insights about existing ‘informal mHealth’ practices to formal digital health initiatives.

Informal mHealth

Throughout the hospital ethnography, I often saw how health workers used their own phones to support service delivery. They also use their phones for: consultations; sharing images; using
Google to find out more about a condition or medicine; making reports of field activities; making records for advocacy purposes; using the torch for examinations; and for disease surveillance using WHO’s Open Data Kit. As well as supporting service provision, having a smartphone is a prerequisite for hospital staff for accessing feedback from colleagues. Each department has their own WhatsApp group to co-ordinate work, ask questions and share information. People are notified of staff meetings over WhatsApp. I attended one hospital-wide staff meeting which had been organised via WhatsApp the day before. One doctor argued this was too short notice, as not everyone had a smartphone or enough MBs to receive the message in time, showing the extent to which having a smartphone and consistent access to data is required.

At the end of each consultation in the physiotherapy department, phone numbers are exchanged, “call me at any time if anything changes”. Whilst the head of the department encourages this practice, and sometimes service users seem relieved to have this means of contact, other therapists complained that this means they can then be handling calls and messages out-of-hours. I also saw how the physiotherapists would use their phone to photograph and take videos of patients' movements, to show back to them and their attendant relatives. The head of the department advised the other therapists to take photos of each patient before, during and after treatment so they can document their improvement. Service users or their relatives with smartphones, cameras, and WhatsApp, would be asked to send photos and videos over time of certain exercises so they can monitor their progress, filing the data on personal phones and laptops. This is similar to observations in South Africa regarding the use of smartphones to document and refer dermatological conditions via photographs on WhatsApp (Mars and Scott, 2017).

Whilst these communications evidently offer a convenient and effective way to document patient progress, and to keep health workers and their patients in contact, they also come at a cost. Busy and under-paid health workers are expected to pay for their own device, including airtime and data (Hampshire et al., 2017). Health workers said they even pay for their own subscription to reliable web resources such as NIH or the Mayo clinic. This is indicative of expectations for health workers to sacrifice their own time, money and wellbeing for the sake of their patients, leaving them ‘vulnerable to exploitation’ (Hampshire et al., 2021, p. 19). The other main issue that health workers reported is data storage; some expressed a need for a software to store and categorise their data. Whilst widely a controversial issue, data protection was not mentioned as a
concern, but other studies have shown how the sharing of personal health data with limited regulation means that it is vulnerable to security breaches (Bloom et al., 2017).

As shown in the previous chapter, informal mHealth practices span beyond the hospital, including existing social networks and particularly extended families. As with Omara above, help-seeking often starts with a phone call to a trusted friend or relative, particularly amongst the older generation. This demonstrates the importance of social relations and trust in making care choices, particularly where uncertainties around health are being managed (Hamill et al., 2019; Whyte, 1997). The following section further contextualises the health care responsibilities of families for older people, detailing representative care routines and related conversations.

**Family Responsibility**

Responsibility for maintaining health, providing care and mitigating health crises generally starts within the family, particularly for those who have limited access to formal healthcare systems. This reflects both ‘moral discourses with local resonance’ regarding the responsibilities of kinship and relatedness, as well as the marketization of public health services (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 199; Kehr, J., 2018, p. 13; Bukuluki and Mubiru, 2014, p. 10). In Lusozi, for example, during hospital outreach programmes, the Head of the ‘Community Health’ department makes sure to emphasise the “big role of families…every family must be able to take care”. He noted that family, as the “basic unit of community”, increasingly denotes a nuclear household with immediate relatives, rather than extended intergenerational family networks with proximity. The heads of each household “must be able to provide” preventative measures for sickness such as immunization, food, water and sanitation. In the case of sickness, they must fund and support treatment, as well as transport to hospitals. In their study of care during the ebola outbreak in Gulu, medical anthropologists Grace Akello and Sung-Joon Park term this the “oughtness of care” for sick relatives, based on the distinctive moral logic of care, that it “has to be done”, regardless of the fear instilled by public health campaigns (c.f. Kleinman, 2014, p. 119; Park and Akello, 2017, p. 60). The imperative or “oughtness” for family to provide healthcare for older relatives can require a significant investment of time and resources, especially for long-term chronic conditions. For example, all hospital in-patients are expected to be accompanied by an attendant relative, typically a daughter, who is responsible for daily nursing, providing food and practical assistance. Taking this time away from work can inevitably have a profound impact on household earnings, which for long-term health problems can be particularly debilitating.
the community health practitioner noted, it also means that “people suffer a lot without children” and that “having children is an insurance”. Without them, “elderly people suffer…they may have some kind neighbours, but it’s not sustainable”. And the prospect of the further institutionalization of elder care is “not a good thing. In a family setting, you feel better, not with strangers or rude nurses”.

Interdependence with children thus forms, in Nyamnjoh’s words, “insurance against the risk of dependence” (2002: 115-116) on ‘kind neighbours’ or unkind institutions. The idea of children as a form of ‘insurance’ has similarly been noted in an ethnography of migrant family life in urban China (Zavoretti, 2017), where it was analysed both in terms of a long-standing ‘gendered notion of filial piety’ as well as the idea of “pre-empting future risks through private means” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 204). Evidently, the adaptation of responsibilities along ‘mutually constituted’ (ibid, 203) moral and market lines is a phenomenon occurring across contexts, demonstrating the globalized and personal nature of discussions about care for the older generation. Family is promoted by institutions as an essential ‘safe-haven’ for self-interested individuals, providing protection against risks in the wider world (ibid). In turn, as in gendered care expectations for ‘attendant relatives’ in Lusozi hospital for example, further burdens are placed on the ‘idealized woman carer’ whose responsibility for the provision of unpaid care labour is thus reproduced (ibid); this is further illustrated with relevant contextual and ethnographic insights below.

With the moral obligation to provide money between the generations (Kyaddondo, 2013, p.43), money is a significant aspect of elder care (Livingston, 2003). This was demonstrated in the previous chapter on phone use, showing that remittances can be used as a ‘care currency’ (Singh et al., 2017). Paying health costs also relies on the ‘distributive dynamics’ of a wider social infrastructure, for example in raising money for treatment across families and communities (Ferguson, 2015: 115). Kilongeni explained:

Sickness just comes by coincidence, sometimes abruptly when you’re not even prepared, you need money to take care of that. So if any sickness, you just have to begin to look around, call a family meeting for any contribution for treatment, “this one has a problem, we need to…”, so we help each other like that.

I often saw how Kilongeni and his children were called upon to support their relatives at home in the village, particularly his mother, to whom they would send food and mobile money during increasingly unpredictable dry seasons. Kilongeni would visit regularly to check on the land and
his mother’s health, with his children often funding the transport. Most participants have similar responsibilities to send money or fund visitation to older relatives, which can span extensive distances.

‘Care across distances’, a global phenomenon, reveals the relational mitigation of increasing mobility and migration (Ahlin, 2018; Oudshoorn, 2011; Pols, 2012). Home is ‘reconfigured’, and existing ‘moral economies’ and family norms adapted in new locations (Sigona et al., 2015). This is seen for example in anthropological work on ‘complex global care chains’ (Buch, 2015b, p. 286) or “transnational constellations of care” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 199), such as migrant care workers travelling to Western Europe and North America, leaving their own children with grandparents and sending remittances home (e.g. Ahlin, 2018; Baldassar et al., 2017; Horn and Schwepppe, 2016; Madianou and Miller, 2012). Across various fieldsites of the ASSA project, contextually-appropriate practices were employed to support the care of older people at a distance, for example, the use of visual communication on smartphones provides affective support for older people in Japan and China, in line with existing social norms of expression and etiquette (Wang and Happio-Kirk, 2021). In Lusozí, remittances accommodate ideals of cohabitation and home-based care in a context of age-based migration between the city and the village. Existing norms and relations are thereby reconfigured and reproduced, despite complex changes in living arrangements.

Whilst care for elders ideally relies on intergenerational cohabitation in rural areas, and most younger people now need to stay in the city to make a living, there are a few alternatives. These alternatives can be understood as what Coe and Alber term an ‘age-inscription’, a patterned and practical response where existing possibilities fall short of dominant norms of ageing due to social change (Coe and Alber, 2018). If adult children can afford it, they might pay for a domestic servant to help their parents with daily care, household chores and farming. Often, domestic workers are young girls from a poorer household within the extended family network, who in return might receive school fees or an apprenticeship. Another common system of family support is grandchildren being sent to live with their grandparents in the village (Coe, C., 2020), for whom there is mutual benefit of care and reduced cost of living and of paying for their education in the city. For example, Mama Eric’s parents take care of her sister’s children in Kitgum town, which means they can access cheaper schooling, and take care of their grandmother, fetching water and preparing tea when she’s in pain. Mama Eric herself prefers to have her children at home, as she thinks grandparents spoil their grandchildren, letting them off housework, “they don’t learn”. There is a sense that this informal care option can compromise
the grandchild’s up-bringing and education, with schooling also considered to be of a lower standard in rural areas, determining barriers to accessing other forms of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, P, 1986; Meinert, 2004). This shows how social status can be reproduced through forms of care (Coe, C., 2020).

Social roles and inequities are also reproduced through the gendered dimensions of care expectations. Historically, family care tasks have been divided along gender lines, with sons more likely to provide financial support, and daughters responsible for daily care (Livingston, 2003: 25; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 11,13). As “everywhere in the world” (Roth, 2010), this is often still the case in Uganda today (Gertrude et al. 2019; MacNeil; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996) , where “caregiving is viewed as a woman’s role even if she has full time employment” (Gertrude et al., 2019). As introduced in chapter 3, women in Lusozi are typically largely responsible for the day-to-day management of health and well-being in their household, which can include earning money to provide food, clothing and medicine. Daily nursing of older people, including washing and feeding them, is also often the responsibility of wives, daughters and daughters-in-law, who are also primarily responsible for the care of their own children (Livingston, 2003, p. 215).

These gendered care roles were particularly notable during an interview with an older woman in her home. She has leg complications related to side effects from her anti-retroviral treatment (ART), so is house-bound and unable to continue working in her waragi brewing business. When I asked, ‘who took care of her?’, she responded that her first born son is taking care of her, bringing money. Meanwhile, her daughter was cooking, so I asked who is taking care of her on a day-to-day basis, which prompted her to mention the care her daughter cooks and cleans for her; in fact, her daughter had quit her full-time job in order to stay at home and look after her mother. Despite her daughter’s sacrifice, her efforts are less notable or defined as ‘care’ in contrast with the son’s financial support.

As another example of many, Sobi and her daughters takes care of her 90-year-old her mother at home, whilst her brother provides money for transport to the hospital and medical requirements. Sobi’s mother is generally considered well as she can talk, telling us many stories of Lusozi in the past. However, she has pain in her legs, “they feel like fire”, and she’s lacking energy, ‘maybe just because she’s old’. She also has ‘pressure’, for which needs daily medication, which her sons living elsewhere pay for and deliver. As she can no longer walk, her son made the decision to move her next door to Sobi, refusing to let her return home and saying she needed to stay where
she could be cared for by Sobi and her daughters. This is a subject of contention which she
frequently returned to, ‘I want to go home, no one is taking care of my house’, and she’s waiting
for enough energy to be able to do so. Mostly she stays inside, but sometimes they lift her
outside so that she can get some fresh air. She says she receives many visitors, which makes her
‘feel very good’. If she needs to go to hospital, her sons pay for a car to transport her. Her
daughters and granddaughters wash her and her bedsheets once a day, every evening. In between
working on her various vending businesses in Lusozi, Sobi brings her food, visiting many times a
day or sending one of her daughters. Whilst Sobi’s brother decided on this arrangement for his
mother’s care, Sobi and her daughters are responsible for the daily, intimate care at home:
cooking, cleaning, bed making, company and conversation.

This pragmatic arrangement for Sobi’s mother’s care fits within the ideal family care arrangement
of elderly people being co-resident with their families. However, generally, there are few elderly
people in Lusozi, with most people in their 80s and 90s living in rural areas, instead receiving
support from their older children through phone calls, remittances and visitation when possible.
Nakyanzi checks on her mother by visiting her at home in a village, a five-hour drive from
Kampala every weekend. She explained that people are also responsible for their neighbours’
wellbeing and are obligated to check on them regularly, ideally every two days; if they’re gone for
a few days, you pass the message on. Responsibilities for checking on other people can leave
“little time for self”. Even when she allows herself a day off, at the end of it she feels it is a day
wasted without visiting someone. Nakyanzi thinks this leads people to focus on the “smaller
picture of family units, and sometimes forget society”. She attributes that to the “pressure of
globalisation” which has reduced the community bond to smaller units, based on proximity. In
other words, personal pressures imposed by global processes are turning a once more communal
outlook inward, to immediate families or within the household. These ‘global pressures’ also
include the appeal of independent, selfish ways of life in western countries observable to young
people through new media which can “make you feel freer than your original cultural norms”.
Younger people may be influenced to become more ‘independent minded’, with ‘self’ more “on
the agenda”. She said that it’s now more common to hear people say, “I’m actually very busy”,
instead of conforming to the expectation that “you must be there for people, as a team” and
“check on your people” and “be responsible for your community, and your own belonging”. In
line with many researchers (Mcintosh, T., 2017.; Nzabona and Ntozi, 2017; Oppong, 2006;
Schatz and Seeley, 2015; Whyte, 2017), participants, policy makers and NGO advocates, she is
concerned that this will be a problem for elder care, as institutionalising older relatives is “not
allowed” and instead “they would rather abandon them”.
There are some elderly people in Lusozi and in Amor’s home village who are known to have been ‘abandoned’ without family to care for them; as shown in chapter 3, they often rely instead on assistance from their community, particularly for food. Whilst the phenomenon of abandonment in old age was occasionally discussed during the research, often considered the worst possible fate for later life, older people living alone were rarely encountered themselves. This in itself is perhaps representative of their tangential position to social networks. Whilst neighbours tend to step in to provide older people abandoned by family with basic needs, this reveals the extent to which family is crucial to the health and social status of older people. National figures suggest that older people living alone is fairly common, notwithstanding ‘potentially compromised’ demographic data on older Africans (Randall and Coast, 2016); based on an analysis of the 2010 Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS), Wandera et al have noted that 9% of older people over the age of 50 live alone (Wandera et al., 2017). Other studies have identified the risks of living alone and associated loneliness to health, wellbeing and financial stability amongst older people in Uganda, notably in urban areas (Kuteesa et al., 2012, p. 297; Najumba-Mulindwa, I., 2003, p. 10; Nzabona et al., 2016): “isolated, dislocated from former social circulation and missed being relevant” (Nyanzi, 2011, p. 378). Whilst the established narrative on elder abandonment suggests that this is a contemporary phenomenon (Aboderin, 2004; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Sokolovsky, 2020), with the growth of the older population, adult children shirking care responsibilities, a shrinking care network, and the devastation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Ssengonzi, 2007b), health workers and participants both in Kampala and in Kitgum felt that this had always been the case: “it is just a part of life”. This is supported by Nahemow’s 1979 study which identifies social isolation and loneliness amongst ‘the aged Baganda’ (Nahemow, 1979), as well as Girling’s record of some older men living on their own in the Acholi sub-region in 1960 (Girling, 2014, p. 108). However, where abandonment by the State is already felt by older people today, and where extended family and clan networks are disintegrating, neglect and abandonment by adult children and other immediate relatives presents a significant risk of hardship.

Fassin locates the ‘zone of abandonment’ as representative of the evaluated ‘worthiness of life’ (Fassin, 2009: 54), the treatment of individuals considered tolerable in moral economies which construct differentiated values of lives; what he terms ‘biolegitimacy’. He follows Biehl’s ethnography of institutionalized ‘Vita’, who says “people forgot me” (ibid, 54). Abandonment is also associated with institutionalized care amongst research participants. On the subject, many people would ask me in hushed tones if it’s true that ‘we put our old people in care homes’,
thought to be like a prison for people who don’t have relatives. In contrast, Cati Coe has noted that despite the ‘orthodox’ narrative in favour of family care traditions in Ghana, her older research participants are open to old age homes as a ‘heterodox’ form of elder care (Coe, 2019; Coe, C., 2020). As care homes are few in Ghana, this openness is based on a “social imagination”, which draws on known institutional elder care practices in the West, a pragmatic resignation to the idea that home-based intergenerational care is no longer possible in the current economic context, and an ideal of institutional sociality and availability of care based on past experiences in boarding schools (ibid). This is similar to Sarah Lamb’s work on the ideas around care homes in India, which are interpreted as Western institutions whilst also being appropriated for contextual relevance (Lamb, 2016). This highlights the explicit role of the global in seemingly personal and intimate care responsibilities. A ‘social imagination’ of the dignity or disregard of older people in other countries serves to rhetorically re-establish care norms, which are pragmatically adapted to suit shifting circumstances.

**Self-care**

The “oughtness” (Park and Akello, 2017) of long-term care for older people can come with obligations, inconveniences and tensions. As found by medical anthropologist and clinician Arthur Kleinman, who was the caregiver for his wife as she suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, compassion and anger are the two sides of care, something which requires endurance (Kleinman, 2014, 2009). Many participants in Lusozi outlined their aspirations to be able take care of themselves financially and physically in later life to avoid being a burden on their families. As one grandfather put it, “they also have their responsibility now, and I don’t want to be a liability to them. They also have their families some of them now, so I don’t want to burden them too much”. In this way, self-care can be an act of care for others. This was also evident in the discussion in chapter 3 on self-prescribing and home treatment amongst older women, who buy medicine in the pharmacy rather than visiting the hospital which would incur fees and interrupt working routines. Many women we met throughout the research were taking ineffective or even dangerous drugs such as irregular doses of anti-biotics, or over-medicating with painkillers. This was similarly noted by Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo in their 1996 ethnography of ‘Kampala women getting by’; where women might seek treatment for their children, parents or husbands, the hospital or clinic is a last resort for themselves, and they would prefer to self-medicate (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 141). On-going practices of self-medication amongst women in Lusozi today affirms their sustained relevance within both
interpersonal and socioeconomic conditions, family ‘repertoires’ and the privatized economy of self-reliance (Nguyen et al., 2017). In other words, global processes turn responsibilities inward and determine disparities in access to health and care.

Various studies of ‘successful ageing’ in Africa argue that people desire interdependence with family in later life (Mcintosh, T., 2017; Schatz and Seeley, 2015; Susan Whyte, 2017; Van der Geerst, 2011). As Van der Geerst puts it, isolation and loneliness in old age is the “clearest indication of unsuccessful ageing” (Van der Geerst, 2011, p. 67), rather than health problems. This is contrasted with policy and discourses in Europe and the US, which emphasise health as the responsibility of an older individual, for example through ‘wellness’, exercise and nutrition, to alleviate the increasing burden of population ageing on health systems and families (Lamb, 2017; McIntosh, T., 2017, p. 10). Susan Whyte goes as far as to say that ‘successful ageing’ paradigm “doesn’t exist” in Uganda where remaining healthy and independent is not “culturally resonant” (Whyte, 2017, p. 244). In contrast, many older participants in this research outlined their aspirations to avoid burdening their children by taking care of themselves through everyday self-care practices of eating well, doing exercise, and avoiding stress and unprotected sex.

Based on her study of ‘resources for health in Uganda’, Meinert observes that strength, a ‘strong body’ in older age, indicates long life, a healthy lifestyle, self-sufficiency and access to other resources (Meinert 2004, p. 21). Strength was similarly valued by research participants as indicative of sustained health and resistance to illness, and Amor would often compliment older participants on their strength in our initial exchanges. Nutrition and exercise are therefore particularly important aspects of care, for self and others. Amigo, who is an engineer, takes care of his health by keeping active and restricting his diet, since he was advised by doctors to lose weight in his forties, “I rarely eat fried foods, meat is restricted, I mainly take vegetables, fruits, no sugar, some bit of honey”. Omara, who as shown earlier mitigates potential hospital malpractice by seeking health advice from two separate hospitals, is also careful to monitor what he eats, “I fear to eat these fried things with a lot of oil, I concentrate on eating greens so much…instead of buying the juice which is already made I buy fresh fruits”. Whilst he enjoys ‘pashing’, spending time playing games, chatting and laughing with other men in Lusozi, he avoids drinking alcohol with them, and advises them to take care of themselves too:

Especially because nowadays it is not in the least helping, it destroys my bones…. At the same time am doing some exercise, you see it is keeping me [strong] up to now. Others
are saying you are still strong like this while others are getting old, I say you have to take care of yourself.

Obalo, a policeman and football coach, has been told that he’s at risk of diabetes, so he’s now…

…abandoning some food which I was eating…Say like posho now, I used to eat a lot of posho and now a lot of starch is not so good, that’s why I have changed a bit. And having daughters at times is good, sometimes you come and find they have prepared other type of food like mattoke (savoury banana). I avoid even these oily things…I don’t take things with sugar.

The quality of food and cooking methods is often discussed as a significant aspect of health and sickness prevention. Acholi participants would often champion their long-standing cooking methods of pasting and boiling food, more likely to ensure a long life. A 100-year-old woman in Palabek, for example, attributes her long and healthy life to her diet of millet, greens, peas and pasted food; all included in a beautiful meal she served to us. Ladit observed:

Acholi of old age used to have a very good and healthy way of living of up to above 100 years minus serious illness; they had secret being boiled food, food mixed with pasted sim sim (sesame) or ground nuts called locally as ‘odi’, well prepared with millet bread ‘kwon kal’. Other food varieties like maize, cassava are also added supplements. There was above 50 or more fruit and roots, both grown or wild, available as edible food or medicine, for example oranges, sweet bananas, mango, guavas, avocados, jackfruit for growth, ‘kwomo’, ‘kongo-ogwal’ ‘oywelul’ ‘lango’ ‘kwomo’ ‘olelemo’, which carry a lot of vitamins and medical value. The current medical doctors still prescribe them for most, if not all, the people visiting hospitals.

Many people would also emphasise the risks of processed foods and modern cooking methods, frying in cooking oil or using excess salt and sugar, as evidence of the dangers of modernity, imported and ‘dotcom’ lifestyles in the city, in contrast with long-standing, tried and trusted approaches. As Acholi poet and critic Taban Lo Liyong’s writes, “[t]here were no onions to be fried with fat or oil; there were no sugars and ice creams; there were no hamburgers filled with everything dear to a child's tongue. With the result that the youths never lost their mothers to obesity, high blood pressure, or other such diseases” (Liyong, 2018). As expanded below, various participants’ observations and epidemiological studies have similarly associated urbanization and
processed foods with an epidemic of high blood pressure in Uganda (Guwatudde et al., 2015; Lunyera et al., 2018; Musinguzi and Nuwaha, 2013; Wandera et al., 2015), known as ‘pressure’ in Lusozi. Global processes are thus explicitly linked with the body through attributions and experiences of ‘pressure’ and other NCDs, as mediated through food and thought.

**Pressure**

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, strokes, cancer and mental illness have emerged relatively recently as widespread health problems in Uganda (Whyte, 2016). As well as genetic factors, NCDs are often attributed to modern lifestyles, economic stressors, alcohol consumption and processed diets (Guwatudde et al., 2015; Reubi et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2014). NCDs can be some of the most resource-intensive conditions to manage, requiring long-term changes in family life including working routines, regular visits to hospital, and covering costs of treatment. National and international healthcare funding prioritises communicable diseases such as HIV (Whyte, 2016, p. 222), with only 17% of the national budget allocated to non-communicable conditions, leaving families mostly responsible for these costs.

For example, hypertension requires daily medication, which can cost UGX 1,500 (£0.30) per tablet, or up to UGX 50,000 (£10.75) per month. Treatment for diabetes, often co-morbid with hypertension, is even more costly. Mwebaze has had type 2 diabetes for 20 years, which she thinks she inherited from her father. She has various daily medical requirements to ensure that she can safely eat a meal, coming to a total of at least UGX 120,000 or £25.80 each month, “I try but it’s not easy”. Fortunately, she has regular income from rental properties, and three adult sons with good jobs. She said that most people with diabetes in Uganda cannot afford this medicine and have to “live by God’s grace”; “it is an expensive disease...I pity those who can’t afford [the medicine]...I sometimes ask the doctors in the hospitals, ‘why don’t you care for the diabetic like the way you care for HIV patients?’”.

Hypertension or high blood pressure, known as ‘pressure’ in Lusozi, is probably the most common health problem faced by older participants. Various epidemiological and cross-sectional studies have found high blood pressure to be prevalent in Uganda (Guwatudde et al., 2015; Lunyera et al., 2018; Musinguzi and Nuwaha, 2013; Wandera et al., 2015), particularly in central and urban areas in the country (Guwatudde et al., 2015; Nankwanga, A. Neema, S., 2020, p. 82). A national epidemiological study noted “a region-wide epidemic of hypertension in sub-Saharan Africa, which is probably related to rapid urbanization in the region” (Lunyera et al., 2018). As
shown in participant’s observations in the previous section, urbanization has come with a perceived deterioration in eating habits, such as increased consumption of sugar and cooking oil (Roth, 2010). Amongst participants, hypertension was previously considered a “disease of the rich” and the Global North; as Amara said, ‘the food we eat nowadays brings us problems…I know many people with pressure, it used to attack only rich people who were stressed thinking of the bank, but it’s now uniform’.

‘Pressure’ is variously experienced, with participants describing symptoms including a fast heart rate, difficulty breathing, exhaustion, itching, eyesight problems, limb swelling and pain, overheating and dizziness. Just as it can be variously experienced, ‘pressure’ can also be variously understood (Littlewood 1998; Horst & Miller, 2000: 123). As well as diet, financial problems related to family responsibilities were commonly identified as a cause of ‘pressure’, in some cases equated with it. This common attribution could reflect medical advice and the epidemiological attribution of high blood pressure to stress and lifestyle, the name of the non-communicable condition itself, and the health and wellbeing concerns prioritized by participants; the latter is the primary focus of this ethnographically led analysis, intended to highlight the perceived responsibilities of older individuals, as well as their relationships to others and the wider world.

According to many participants’ interpretations, additional burdens of care on mothers and grandmothers, responsible for the health and advancement of everyone in their households, applies ‘pressure’ which can result in hypertension. Aida, a 49-year-old mother of eight, says ‘I’m suffering from pressure and ulcers. I have pressure because of paying school fees. Pressure means a lot of problems.” The pressures associated with paying school fees are widespread, and often discussed (Vokes and Mills, 2015, p. 331). In a survey of 150 older people in Lusozi Godown, participants pay school fees for two children on average, spending an average of 760,000 UGX (£151) per semester, only slightly less than the average monthly income of 780,000 UGX (£155). Paying school fees also puts particular pressure on those with income, who might be responsible for the education of the whole family (Whyte, 1997, p. 44). Owiny, a 57-year-old man with 12 children and an income of 5,000,000 UGX (£995) per month, is responsible for as many as 20 children’s school fees, to a total of 6,000,000 UGX (£1,194) per term. This suggests that a significant proportion of his income is being spent on school fees alone. For many, ‘overthinking’ about school fees is explicitly linked with high blood pressure and related chronic illnesses. Mwesigwe Robert, a 45-year-old boda driver, also attributes his pressure to ‘thinking a lot’ of paying for school fees, hospital fees and food, “there’s a lot of
things so it becomes hard for you to control your thoughts…and you’re one person so you can’t control your pressure”.

Whilst working hard to provide their children with an education, to the detriment of personal health and aspiration, a few people question the value of it. They have seen that jobs for young people are scarce regardless of their education. Many graduates face under-employment in terms of their skills, time and income levels (Kiranda, Y. Walter, M. Mugisha, M., 2017), making it difficult to fulfil expectations of gaining salaried employment and providing for their families (Meinert, 2009, p. 9). Older people, who have made significant investments in education, can then be without financial support in later life. I interviewed a 60-year-old woman who told me, whilst sitting amongst photographs of her youngest daughter’s recent graduation, that “there’s nothing good in education”. These days, “if they don’t have school fees, they stress a lot”. Her son-in-law had pressure, as he had “so much stress over the kids…the problems bring the pressure”. She remembers that if you graduated in the past, “you found a place to work, but now it’s not there”. She has four daughters who have graduated but cannot find employment, so she keeps paying for her grandkids in the hope that it will be different for them; “every kid has their own luck”. In the meantime, her responsibilities to provide for her family are sustained to make up the deficit, a common ‘age-inscription’ (Coe and Alber, 2018) or family arrangement for managing this economic situation.

Widespread under-employment also has direct health implications for the younger generation. From the perspective of older research participants, many voiced their concerns about increasing despondence amongst educated young people with limited employment opportunities, who turn instead to drugs or ‘njagga’ and alcohol, “no jobs, idleness, peer pressure…some take it [alcohol] to pass the time. They have no work and just want to gain confidence”. Many participants express the impact of ‘njagga’ and alcohol on their children’s minds, families and futures, and also on their own lives; it can exacerbate their on-going responsibilities to provide for the whole family, despite their age. This shows that if youth is a time of prolonged ‘waithood’ in precarious urban economies (Thieme, 2018), then it is for the older generations too.

The on-going responsibilities of the older generation for themselves and their children was eloquently expressed in an interview with Achola, a 60-year-old woman. Despite not having had children herself, Achola is a mother to many children, including her own nephews and nieces. She is confident that she ‘knew how to raise them up’. Some of their parents had died of AIDS or were killed by rebels during the war, ‘some for my brothers, some for my sisters’. Six of them
now live in the village, and five stay with her in Lusozi. ‘They are lucky because I am here’. She is staying with them in Lusozi so that they can continue their studies, ‘I’m their parents, their father and mother are not there’. Like her good friend Evelyn, who has lived nearby since her she was excluded from her husband’s land for struggling to conceive, she values her independence and her female friendships, the women she would turn to if she needed help. If not for the children’s education, Achola would have returned to the village by now, ‘amero caro (I like the village), there’s food there you can dig… I know people are there sitting under the tree now - I can see them from here!’. For Achola, ‘Staying here is now difficult, no money, I can’t afford rent and food… I want to go to the village now, I’m old and I can’t keep working for money’. I asked if she hopes to return to the village in the future, and she laughed, ‘Bambi, I haven’t even anything to dig it all. My money has all gone on school fees here in Kampala’. Do you expect the children will take care of you in return? ‘I want them to take care, but you don’t know…even if you produce many, maybe only one or two will care, but for others, they won’t care’. In the meantime, she works hard, distilling waragi in the factory at the bottom of Lusozi hill, a physically demanding job that is a common form of employment for single mothers to pay school fees. As the founder of the waragi factory said to myself, Amor and two male Ugandan filmmakers:

You know very well that this kind of work men cannot do… If you just sit at home because you’re sick, it will be hard to educate your children. And then you find there is no future. So with this business I keep paying school fees. One of my children is supposed to go to University this year. She wants to study medicine. We do it even if it is going to affect your health, but for the future you have to do it.

Here, the responsibility to earn money and provide for the family is shown to be carried by women, who are capable of compromising their own health in order to provide for their children and ‘the future’, whilst putting their own everyday lives and aspirations aside. Achola describes how she manages her own ‘waithood’ and worries about the future by praying at the local Catholic Church every morning at 6.30am, ‘too much I like it’. Sometimes if she stays at home instead, she has too much time to think about her future old age. ‘I feel that, what am I going to be when I reach up to 70, 80 years? I will be old, I cannot dig or carry water, so what can I do? If I go to Church and pray, the thinking reduces’. One day she even had a dream which ‘told her to stop over thinking’, which she believes was a vision from God. At the time she ‘was so worried, I used to over think as I had seven kids in the house’. Now, she lets thoughts go, ‘if not I may build pressure or get a stroke’. We asked Achola what she understands pressure to mean:
Pressure, ‘tic tic tic’ [imitating heartbeat], pressure is overthinking. If you think a lot your heart beats at a high speed to the point that if they bring bad news suddenly you can just faint…it can go to your brain, then it can disturb your brain.

She advises others to ‘stop over-thinking’, because ‘pressure is not a disease, it comes from your own thinking’. This is the same for mental health problems, which are ‘hard, but are from over thinking’. To avoid over-thinking about her own future, she goes ‘to pray for my soul, so I go to a better place’. Her grandchildren come to Church with her, and two of them in the village even work in the Church ministry. She hopes that her grandchildren are all ‘going to be very well’ and that one day one of them will be a Priest and one a sister, as ‘I have seen what they do in Church, it is really something good’.

Stress and pressure as ‘thinking too much’ is a common idiom in Lusozi, as around the world (Kaiser et al., 2015). The idiom links the personal to the economic, implying that thoughts about adversity due to a lack of resources can be uncontrolled, intrusive and damaging. Whyte argues that the idioms ‘in-between’ the personal and contextual can offer insight into how shared meanings define the uncertainties around health problems, helping people to deal with them (Whyte, 1997, p. 23) and providing ‘ontological security’ (Finnström, 2008, p. 82; Jackson, 1998a, pp. 71–2). This idiom of pressure as ‘thinking too much’ expresses an intersubjective relationship between the internal workings of the body and the external workings of the wider world, as it is ‘lived, internalized, articulated, produced and reproduced’ (Jackson, 1998b, p. 6); when external pressures become unmanageable, they overwhelm the body via the thoughts. This imbalance can also be attributed to mental health problems, sometimes similarly conceived as a lack of control over thoughts, rather than a disease in itself; their mediation is often considered the responsibility of the person under pressure, who should ‘stop over-thinking’. This advice explicitly depicts social pressures on individuals to prevent or manage sickness imposed by socioeconomic factors.

What are some of the strategies employed to ‘stop over-thinking’? Stella Nyanzi has conducted research interviewing “widowed mama grannies” in Kampala city slums. She spoke with grandmothers who seek solace, sanity and strength from prayer, with one 72-year-old saying “I pray for strength to look after my grandchildren” (Nyanzi, 2009). For Achola, prayer has been a way of reducing ‘pressure’ in relation to her present responsibilities and the unknown future. This daily morning ritual is shared by many others, such as Nabasa, who also uses prayer to share and reduce her worries, and to ensure that her children have a ‘successful life’. She has faith in
prayer since she lost her job; she had prayed to God, and not long afterwards had found an organisation to sponsor her kids school fees. She hopes for ‘what every parent hope for’, praying every day for her kids to be ok in the future, ‘that they can be able to help themselves first, so they can help me after’. As soon as she wakes up, she thanks God, as ‘to wake up is a gift’. She then goes to the local Catholic Church for mass at 6.20am, which she has done every day for her whole life, excluding special occasions. She kneels down to thank Him, to carry all her worries to put in his heart and ask for help. ‘It is only God who is able’. Some of her worries she will only keep for God. Her main worry for her children is that they won’t be able to find employment when they graduate. If they come to her complaining of disappointments in their lives, she tells them to “kneel down and pray”. She prays God “opens ways for them” so that they can get jobs and also take care of her – then she’ll be happy.

Through prayer, a daily routine of sharing worries with God, Nabasa and Achola are able to alleviate the stresses of bringing up and educating many children, which offers the hope and strength necessary to fulfil these family responsibilities. This includes their worries for the future of their grandchildren, and for their own old age. If their children are successful, perhaps they will also be able to support them in return. This is not just a reciprocal exchange, but a parallel sociality, with shared ‘waithood’ across the generations. Idioms defining ‘pressure’ and its management depict an intersubjective conceptualisation of the absorption and re-articulation of economic stress via thoughts, a socially implicated yet self-determined, internal process. This outlines the extent to which an older individual – especially a (grand)mother – is expected to manage their own health and wellbeing, both in response to economic conditions and to intergenerational responsibilities. Self-care can thus be another act of familial care, rather than one of ‘individualism’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began by asking the question, ‘who is responsible for older people’s health and care?’, in order to outline observed social processes involved in seeking an answer. What is the role of the state, the family, and the older person themselves, and are they meeting these expectations adequately? Where social possibilities fall short of expectations, which alternative intersubjective relations are formed? What is the role of increasing digital connection, of kind strangers with proximity, of ‘unkind’ or inaccessible institutions? What is the role of relatives, based on which socially determined and embodied roles they inhabit, and based on the much more complex and
messy stories of our interpersonal relationships? Who will do the cooking, cleaning and conversation? Who will provide resources, and how? Answers to the latter questions bring to light the narrowing of economic possibilities. Anthropology operating along these intersubjective lines can shed light onto this parallel, essential mutuality, between people and others, as it promotes or reinforces certain historical trajectorities (Jackson, 1998b; Whyte, 1997). These processes, including modified expectations of care, provide insight into social change more broadly; what Coe and Alber term ‘age-inscriptions’ (Coe and Alber, 2018). Buch’s review of the anthropology of aging and care has similarly emphasised how later life care, even daily intimate support, embodies socio-political and demographic concerns (Buch, 2015b). This also implicates broader interests in healthcare in critical medical anthropology which studies how “individual and collective health is closely entwined with power relations” (Kehr, J., 2018, p. 4) especially the economy (Farmer, 2004; Fassin, 2009; Han, 2012). Care practices in particular offer insight into the mitigation of the neoliberal marketization of health, which also promotes self and family responsibility along moral lines (Nguyen et al., 2017). As Park and Akello show in their study of the moral experiences of caregiving during the ebola outbreak in Gulu in 2000, caregiving can even have a ‘distinctive moral logic’ based on responding to the ‘radical insecurity’ of ill-health, sometimes even at odds with state policy and biomedical discourse (Park and Akello, 2017, p. 60). Or, as Kleinman states, care can act as a ‘counterbalancing force’ to political and economic conditions, whilst simultaneously reflecting moral and religious values, as well as empathy, compassion, respect and love, or endurance, rejection and burdens; he argues that it is what makes us human (Kleinman, 2015).

With greater longevity and increased global mobility, there are widely voiced concerns about the de-personalisation of care, or even the abandonment of elders. The risk of elder abandonment highlights how almost intangible global connectivity between people and others can impinge on lived circumstances, in some cases paradoxically determining day to day isolation. There is an increasing emphasis on the responsibility of older people to take care of their own health, to prevent sickness and avoid becoming a burden on their families and already stretched health systems. This ‘successful ageing’ paradigm is said to be a preoccupation in Europe and the US, based on a tendency to individualism, an emphasis on productivity and an aversion to dependence (Lamb, 2017). In contrast, in East Africa, ‘successful’ older age is said to be a time of ‘interdependence’, with aspirations to home-based intergenerational care (Whyte, 2017). The ethnographic findings outlined in this chapter, based on 16 months research in the Lusozi community and in the nearby government hospital, complicate this binary; in fact, many participants work towards financial and physical independence in old age, in order to continue
supporting their children and to avoid becoming a burden on them in future. Given the established narrative on ‘desired interdependence’ as successful ageing in various African contexts (Mcintosh, T., 2017; Schatz and Seeley, 2015; Whyte, 2017; Van der Geerst, 2011), perhaps the distinction in this ethnography is representative of an ‘age-inscription’ (Coe and Alber, 2018), a patterned shifting of elder care expectations in response to socioeconomic conditions, demographic change and the resulting tensions over caring responsibilities for the older generation (Roth, 2010; Whyte, 2017, p. 246). It also may reflect the specific perspective of people living in precarious urban circumstances, continuing to provide for their families in their 50s, 60s and upwards.

An understanding of elder care norms in other societies, specifically in conversations with me about institutionalized care in the UK, present a disparaged alternative against which existing family expectations are re-established (Coe, 2020). Instead, families often rely on care practices which tend to be overlooked, including remittances, self-care, hiring domestic help or sending grandchildren home, supporting home-based care. This maintains the woman’s long-standing role as family caregiver, even whilst they work to make money in the city; an ‘age-inscription’ or pattern of daily care for elders in response to social change not yet emphasized in dominant discourse (Coe and Alber, 2018). It again shows how studies of age and care offer a lens onto broader processes of social change. As well as reinforcing established gender roles, elder care practices can also reproduce class status (Coe, C., 2020), with the cost-saving approach of sending grandchildren home to the village hindering access to what is considered a good education.

In this way, broad contextual factors are implicit in everyday discussions and routines around elder care, which offer insight into ways people manage uncertainty related to health; as Susan Whyte argues, conversation with others is one of the only ways to seek security amid the ambiguity of life. This is true in times of sickness, when people seek guidance from trusted people and health experts in various fields, a ‘complex continuum’ of care options sought ‘simultaneously and sequentially’ (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 113). Idioms related to health can thus be analysed as insight into relations between people and others, and with broader socio-economic processes. This is evident in the common attribution of ‘pressure’ to economic stressors and on-going family responsibilities; ‘internalised, articulated, produced and reproduced’ (Jackson, 1998b, p. 6). ‘The economy of personal care’ thus emphasizes the role of morals in markets and the use of moral resources to ‘do relational work’ (Zelizer 2010; 1979). Family care underpins the ‘moral economy’ of ageing, which is in flux and under pressure
(Livingston, 2003: 222), as discussed in the subsequent chapter on cooperative morality, which focuses explicitly on conversations around what it means to be ‘good’.
Chapter 7

Cooperative Morality

This chapter draws together the theme of cooperative morality, as understood through established vernacular concepts of togetherness and respect. Relevant anthropological work supports an understanding of morality that emerges through everyday social interactions (Englund, H, 2008; Lambek, Das, Fassin, Keane, 2015; Robbins, 2007; Zigon, 2007), including various studies of the ‘moral moment’ in Uganda particularly (Allen, 2015; Baral, 2016; Boyd, 2013; Doherty, 2020; Finnström, 2008; Karlström et al., 2004; Kyaddondo, D., 2008; Monteith, 2018; Tamale, 2020; Whyte et al., 2016). This everyday morality has been implicitly addressed throughout the thesis so far, which emphasises the meaningful enactment of values in the city: in the ‘aliveness’ and fluidity of ageing ideals, outlined in chapter 2; in the sociality of work, outlined in chapter 3; in the cooperative associations described in chapter 4; in the use of phones to support relatives described in chapter 5; and in the elder care norms and family responsibilities described in chapter 6. The expanded consideration of cooperative morality in this chapter also builds on the central concept of social individuality (Kringelbach, 2013: 215; Nyamnjoh, F., 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2017; Tamale, 2020: 204), in which autonomy is attained through ‘convivial’ cooperation, an ambivalence which plays out particularly through gendered and intergenerational tensions (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 215).

As Englund shows in his review of morality in the anthropology of Africa, up-holding moral obligations to others is also a way to demonstrate personal attributes, an ‘ethical self-formation’ through everyday cooperative practices which counters the ‘imagined social whole’ of a ‘bounded community’ (Englund, H, 2008: 45). This infers a morality which can be made visible, or ‘publicly articulated’ (Allen, 1988). In this ethnography, for example, many people explicitly elucidated what it means to be ‘good’ and for life to go well (Mathews and Izquierdo, 2009).

Morality can be extrapolated from everyday practice, as in earlier chapters summarised here, as well as explicit discourses defining ‘goodness’. Categorisations of goodness and accountability are of course diverse and inconsistent between individuals, who may also re-define morality on an on-going basis. Particular contestations are likely to appear between people of different generations, genders, geographies, ethnicities and religions (Porter, 2019, p. 1027). However, many participants commend those with a ‘good heart’, who are openly generous and cooperative with others. For example, they explained how respect is shown to older people through humble deference, a polite manner of approach, greeting them and seeking their advice. This approach
indicates a ‘good heart’, a display of acknowledging your role within the family or community. This kind of observable, enacted respect, intentionally shown through disposition or conversation, informs an ethnographic understanding of cooperative morality here. It is worth noting that this may have been particularly apparent to me as a visitor, initially seeking to understand ways of showing ‘goodness’ myself and shown on-going generosity by the many people who participated in this research. As the Chairwoman put it in a speech she gave at the workshop concluding this research, the hospitality that was shown to me reveals a good heart, the superior antithesis to money, which will be reciprocated by God:

I want to thank the people … you’ve been giving your time. I think this is so great… we in Godown, we are very poor. But we are very rich at heart. [agreement]… That is how we welcome people. That is how we stay with people… that is how we brought up our children, they are very good like us eh? So they know how to receive people in their home, they know how to treat visitors, they know how to welcome visitors. And they even know how to escort them back to their places…you know surely it is not about money people, it is about heart. It is not about money. And how you do it, that is how God gives you.

The chapter opens with a discussion of socio-historical factors which, according to other anthropologists (Robbins, 2007; Zigon, 2007), may contribute to the visibility of cooperative morality in Lusozi. These factors include religion, sexuality, and the economy, which are all highly moralised domains of social life. As shown in Karlström’s historical analysis of ‘moral community’ in Uganda, a sense of ‘moral crisis’ can be traced to ideological and economic pressures since missionary conversion to Christianity in the 1920s (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 609). The chapter also draws on Sylvia Tamale’s work, which aligns with a few participants’ concerns in showing how African worldviews based on “communitarianism, interdependence, solidarity” (Tamale, 2020, p. 209) are at odds with liberal European values based on individual autonomy, imposed in Uganda and other non-western contexts through Christianity, colonial capitalism and human rights discourses (ibid). The discussion shows how complex historical and moral factors are intertwined, with the potential to play out in relations and interactions, even to the most personal extent. As Baral put it in her study of ‘moral becoming’ in a Kampala market, the city itself forms “an internal and existential landscape, seeping into the citizens’ intimacy and informing their personhood” (Baral, 2016, p. 34).
Moral languages of ‘rights’ and ‘togetherness’ are not dichotomously opposed and can both evidently be employed to seek human dignity and compassion, as well as to reinforce existing power relations. The former is Eurocentric and universalised, imposed through numerous legal and interventionist frameworks. The latter is founded on respect and relatedness, which is threatened by changes in social roles, especially those of women (Obbo, 1980), reifying the heterosexual family and therefore the exclusion of those who fall outside of it, such as people with marginalised sexualities and gender identities, or women who are unable to have children. When falsely homogenised and reified (Nyanzi, 2013), moral values of respect and relatedness therefore have the potential to reinforce social injustices and inequities (Karlström et al., 2004; Nyanzi, 2013; Porter, 2019; Tamale, 2020; Allen, 1988). As Doherty puts it in his study of boda boda taxis and ‘the moral landscape of mobility’ in Kampala, reified traditional family can “form the basis of violent and exclusionary forms of un-personing”, for example denying personhood to people on the basis of kinship defined by heterosexual reproduction (Doherty, 2020, p. 3). Or as Obbo showed in her 1980 study of public discussions about the need to control women’s morality, which could similarly apply to discourses about expectations of women today (Obbo, 1980, p. 15): “[t]he arguments become more complex when colonialism and African authenticity are invoked” in an “attempt to reconcile the dilemmas posed by conflicting ideals of individual advancement based on self-interest and choice, on the one hand, and the development of the community at large, on the other” (ibid), imparting pressures on women to manage this ambivalence, by outwardly complying with their role as care provider whilst also earning money.

However, whilst morality can reinforce ‘subordination and exclusion’ due to ‘positional interests in cultural continuities’, this ethnography supports Karlström’s statement that morality is not entirely reducible to power relations, and that morality is something which is actively debated and decided (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 609). Therefore, again following Tamale’s vision of ‘decoloniality and Afro-feminism’, this chapter seeks a middle ground between universalised values and essentialised traditions, by taking a nuanced contextual approach to moral values as ‘lived and mutable’ (Finnström, 2008, p. 31), displayed and debated. This will be explored through various ethnographic examples, including an interview with Omara, a 60-year-old man, who discussed cooperation and respect at length, a ritual of forgiveness following an accusation of phone theft at Amor’s family home in Palabek, and a narrated instance of community justice in Lusoz Godown. In each of these instances, broad social processes become evident as they are managed intersubjectively, through interaction (Jackson, 1998b). This informs the approach to understanding morality in this chapter, not just in terms of a ‘normative script’, but in
highlighting the observable reflexivity and interactions involved, which offers insight into how people relate to histories, to the world around them, and to each other (Keane, W., 2016).

**Pentecostalism and the moral re-birth**

As elsewhere, the historical context in Kampala is said to have exposed a particularly “moralised environment”, reflected in a “passionate discussion about moral decay in society”, in public and personal domains (Baral, 2018). In analysing ‘moral community in Buganda’, Karlström (2004) traces this sense of ‘moral crisis’ to the 1920s, with the zealous promotion of Christianity by British missionaries and the converted elite, who had gained significant prosperity and influence, prompting religious civil wars and opening the way to British colonization (ibid). Later, the ‘moral crisis of youth’ was attributed to post-Independence political and economic insecurity and heightened by the AIDS epidemic, leading to “the (re)making of moral community under conditions of radical transformation” (ibid, 598). This historical, long-standing sense of ‘moral crisis’ is also observable elsewhere in Uganda, for example in the North, where the ‘moral landscape’ has been “deeply impacted by war” (Porter, 2019, p. 1011), leading to the ‘continuous assertion’ of shared values and ideals (ibid, p.1025).

In Lusozi, this sense of a ‘moral moment’ was evident in public discourses. Religious language is often drawn on in public invocations of moral ideals, as seen in newspaper articles, sermons and political speeches. During an Acholi function at the Catholic Church in Lusozi, a pastor opened the event with a long speech. Like the Chairwoman, he appealed to ‘unity’, working together, in Biblical terms:

> We can only be reckoned with as a strong people if we work together. It is easier to bring a block than seek to unite individuals… We must be our brothers and sisters’ keepers, because what happens to your neighbours will also affect you.

Referring to a spate of abductions, robberies and political murders, he told the many attendees: “We live in difficult times, in a situation of insecurity, the factors of which we do not know”. He appealed to God, “I think we need to dedicate our country more to God to intervene. We should be asking the Lord… God helps those who help themselves”.


In Uganda, 84% of the population report to be Christian in the 2014 census, (a figure to be taken ‘with caution’ (Mbiti, 1969)) and a growing proportion of them are Pentecostal\textsuperscript{3}, or ‘Murokole’ (Born Again). Pentecostal charismatic Christianity originated in North America, and includes ecstatic worship such as speaking in tongues, an experiential Christianity with belief in miracles or gifts from the Holy Spirit (Robbins, 2004, p. 118). As a relatively ‘new religion’, it is also thought to be responsible for an ‘ethical dilemma’ – a moment at which previous ways of life are problematised and questioned (Zigon, 2007, p. 136), encouraging a discontinuity with the past to allow for a moral and spiritual re-birth. Doctrines of Pentecostal Christianity include “strict moralism” such as banning alcohol, indigenous spirits, sexual promiscuity and gambling; a “collectively policed ascetic moral code” of ritual life (Robbins, 2004, p. 129).

Anthropologists working in other contexts have noted that social change and conflict contributes to a ‘heightened sense of moral concern’ and a ‘moral debate in everyday life’ (Robbins, 2007, p. 311). Joel Robbins has analysed a situation of on-going ‘moral breakdown’ amongst the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea, who face a clash of values between their traditional, relational concept of morality, and their relatively new Pentecostal values, focused on individual salvation and the renunciation of traditional values. Robbins observes that this results in an on-going ‘moral self-reflection’, evident for example in the regular confession of sins. When conflicts between values arise, an awareness of moral decision-making is foregrounded (Robbins, 2007, p. 300). Drawing from Robbins’ analysis, Zigon argues that ethics are performed at the point of ‘moral breakdown’, the moment at which morals are no longer used as an unreflective tool (Zigon, 2007) but as ‘conscious efforts of self-mastery and ethical cultivation’ (Baral, 2016, p. 48).

At times, participants who are Pentecostal or Born Again would discuss the ways their cultural beliefs clash with their more recent conversion, which admonishes traditional spiritual beliefs and practices as demonic. As Robbins has noted, this is one reason that can account for the increasing global popularity of Pentecostalism, as unlike other forms of Christianity, it acknowledges and incorporates people’s existing beliefs, even whilst demonising them: a ‘simultaneous rejection and preservation of the traditional cultures it encounters’ (Robbins, 2004, p. 137). For some, like Namukisa, this has caused problems with their families, particularly their parents and grandparents. We met Namukisa at her stall selling snacks and fruit in the centre of Lusozi Godown, opposite the various bars where men, and a few women, congregate to drink. Her ancestral Baganda name has some associations with witchcraft, so since she became Born Again, she has slightly changed the spelling; it now means ‘Blessings’. Her religion has led her to
reject various Baganda traditions that conflict with her beliefs. She no longer attends funeral rites as they perform rituals to appease Baganda Gods; for example, they cut bark cloth from the shroud, and provide sacrificial offerings. As Born Again, she doesn’t believe in those Gods, and believes that Jesus has already shed blood so that no more sacrifice is necessary. She has rejected her Baganda identity ‘totally’, and thinks being Born Again is much better. Her husband is pleased, as it means she has stopped drinking waragi (gin). And they believe that becoming Born Again has cured her daughter of epilepsy. The rest of her family, particularly her mother, ‘feel bad, heartbroken’, and ‘always try to talk to her about it’ – but her decision is made. She expects that the next generation will be much better people, as more of them will have become Born Again.

Pentecostal morality also exerts political influence. Famously, the proposed ‘anti-homosexuality bill’ was strongly linked to the influence of prominent Pentecostal missionaries from the US, who perceive marginalised gender identities and sexual orientations as a threat to ‘the family’. The ways that this politicised homophobia and transphobia in Uganda is tied up with Western imperialism has led to many academic and popular debates. A rhetorical analysis of the bill finds it to be based on a falsely homogenised understanding of the ‘traditional family’ in Africa, which Nyanzi argues can be traced to the colonial codification of otherwise ambiguous and flexible traditions related to kinship, sexuality and gender (Nyanzi, 2013). Even the fixed binaries applied to sexuality and gender are said to be a western import in a region with a long history of non-binary gender identities and sexualities (Awondo, P. Geschiere, P. Reid, G., 2012, p. 149). Beyond debates around the indigeneity or imposition of sexual marginalisation, there are also critiques which link the current politicisation of homophobia, the ‘moral panic’, to socio-economic factors; widespread dissatisfaction with the current economic and political reality, including a ‘resentment of Western imperialism’ itself, also forms a backdrop to the rise of the ‘antigay agenda’ (Awondo, P. Geschiere, P. Reid, G., 2012, p. 154). This shows how complex historical, religious, economic, political and moral factors are intertwined. The complex moral implications of global economic forces are further contextualised and illustrated in the subsequent sections.

**Money & Morality**

In the Pentecostal language of “sacrifice and salvation” emerges a sense of moral crisis and tension (Boyd, 2013, p. 701). This language is biblical, charismatic, as well as economic, a mirror
to the market. Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe gave a speech in 2020 (recent to writing) in which he states that “economics decides who lives and who must be sacrificed”. In conveying how COVID-19 is an insidious ‘symbol’ of our ‘new viral age’, he outlines how a sacrificial global economy is posing constant danger to human life, with forced immobility, widespread environmental devastation, neglected healthcare systems, and toxic working and living conditions. This is the case in Lusozi as in many places around the world. Inevitably, as economic theorist Ferguson has famously shown (Ferguson, 2015), this economy is often interpreted in moral terms, as an exploitative network defended by the State, with its many unfulfilled promises, including those of miracles through self-empowerment resounding in the Churches, NGOs, advertisements and legislative structures. This global political economy can often be characterised as ‘a predator’ (ibid, p. 84), exploiting natural resources, taxing everyday activities - including social media communications - with little offered in return.

This is fundamental to what Ferguson calls “moral vocabularies for thinking about money” (ibid, p. 73), ways of categorising and discussing money as either pro-social and moral, or anti-social and destructive. Money is often associated with a destruction of solidarity and community (Bloch M., Parry J., 1989; Hart, 2005); into this comes binaries of honesty and deception, selfishness and cooperation, consumption and distribution. In Lusozi, if someone is known to have accumulated sudden and significant wealth, they are suspected to have engaged with evil forces, gaining money at the expense of human sacrifice, potentially the lives of their own children and grandchildren. On one level, witchcraft can be understood as an idiom of extraction, an explanation for pervasive wealth disparities and profit based on exploitation (Ferguson, 2015, p. 74). Whyte has previously argued that contemporary witchcraft accusations are a ‘response to modern ambiguity related to oppressive opacity in national and world systems’, in which there is a ‘lack of opportunity to participate’ (Whyte, 1997, p. 204). Just like the intangible powers dictating economic opportunities and enforcing human rights, rumours about concealed sacrificial practices and ‘bad hearts’ threaten cooperative social norms, playing out in ‘dangerously intimate’ relations (Geschiere, 2013). As Geschiere states, witchcraft can represent the ‘dark side of kinship’ (ibid, p. 61), or Archambault, the ‘destructive side of connectivity’ (2017, pp. 153–4), or Karlström, the “toxic negation” of family, generosity and ‘moral community’ (2004, p. 597). Prioritizing material gain over the lives of close relatives represents the ultimate inversion of cooperative morality. However, rather than being inherently immoral or anti-social, money can also be embedded in relations such as kinship and friendship and can ‘transmit moral qualities’ (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989, p. 8), sometimes thanks to ‘dotcom’ technology. This was evident in chapter 5, which outlines how older participants often send and
receive mobile money between family and friends. Money can even be co-opted into a sacred sphere, as a contribution at the time of death and burial (Zelizer, 2018).

On this more personal basis then, economic factors can also become moralised, particularly between the generations. As found by Ugandan anthropologist David Kyaddondo, shifts in economic activities in this context are contributing to the “moral debate over intergenerational relations” (Kyaddondo, D., 2008, p. 29). Those parents unable to fulfil their role of providing material, financial and care resources are open to criticism from their families, as are children who fail to up-hold respect, deference and obedience to their parents (ibid, p. 29). As Nguyen et al put in their analysis of ‘global caring’ cited in chapter 6, in relation to care for older relatives, “the [c]oexistence of local and global ideas about aging and care on which young and elderly people draw to survive and maintain relationships in shifting political economic conditions” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 206) causes moral anxieties in contexts around the world, where there are ‘conflicting moral frameworks’ causing ‘ambivalence and uncertainty’ (ibid). In Kampala specifically, as shown in Monteith’s ethnography of a market in the city, “a breakdown in the practice of helping others…is a source of moral anxiety” (Monteith, 2018, p. 15). This exemplifies how economic conditions over-burden moral values of togetherness and respect, simultaneously obliging and undermining them, making them increasingly difficult to uphold.

In conversation with older people, the younger generation are often characterised as lacking in morals, being increasingly distanced from the ideal standards rhetorically associated with the past and the village. Young women could be admonished for sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy, or for prioritising material possessions over productive love and secure marriage. Young men, especially those unable to find work, are known as ‘idle’. Their engagement with crime and use of drugs and alcohol to pass the time is frequently discussed with concern, both moralistically and also with a sense of understanding in light of the socioeconomic constraints they face. Towards the end of the research, an 18-year-old young man was accidentally killed in Lusozi. He had stolen a woman’s handbag outside a nearby mosque, and then ran to hide, with a group of boda boda drivers chasing him. They caught and beat him, and one of them threw a stone which hit the boy’s head and killed him, reportedly an accident. The stone thrower was subsequently arrested. According to Amor, some people in Lusozi saw this murder as justified, saying “we are tired of these young boys who are thieves”, although mostly his death was regretted, “if the boy was given a chance, he could have changed”. The arrest of the stone thrower differs from instances of community justice that Amor had witnessed growing up, which had been a cause for celebration. As Amor suspects, perhaps the shifting attitudes towards
community justice are symptomatic of harsh economic conditions. “Today you will kill my kid knowing they’ve done something bad, stolen something, not knowing if your own kid will do the same thing”. This is evidently causing a shift in how actions are categorised morally, reflected in many older people’s ‘anxiety’ about the younger generation, to what extent they will be able to cooperate with their families and each other in this economy, and the impact this is having on ‘home’ and community.

Urban youth, especially young men, can be referred to as ‘bayaayes’, literally translated as ‘hooligan’ (Baral, 2016, p. 36). They are thought to be without manners, respect and decorum, and are associated with drug use, theft and violent unrest (ibid). The label thus connotes the bearer as unwanted and polluting (ibid), a symptom and purveyor of society’s ‘moral decay’. As amongst some of the younger people I spent time with in Lusozi and elsewhere in Kampala, the term can also be appropriated as a badge of originality, savvy and style. But in its general use amongst older participants, the term signifies anxieties around complex social shifts, impacting everything from how people earn a living to how they build relationships. As expanded in the section to follow, these uncertainties can play out in moral terms, bringing the perceived and perceptible ‘global’ into conversation with intimate, everyday experiences.

**A good heart**

Showing ‘respect’ and ‘respectability’ is about being seen to uphold family values and your role within them (Boyd, 2013, p. 713). As explained to me throughout the research and detailed in chapter 2, respect is shown to older people through certain dispositions, ways of talking to them, dressing, and conforming to practices such as kneeling to greet them. Young people are expected to speak in soft and courteous tones to their elders, a politeness shown to anyone older than you, even those outside of your family. Elders need to earn this respect by being seen to behave in certain ways, observably showing respect to others and honouring their role of educating younger people.

Behaviours which are publicly visible to others are therefore particularly important to the way an older person is received by their community. As well as theft, public drunkenness is often considered to detract from the respectability of elders. Ladit occasionally drinks himself but is never observably drunk; he believes that overt drunkenness should be criminalized in Uganda and thinks that this is one of the main reasons that respect for elders’ opinions is declining. He
attributes the fact that many young people come to him for advice to his good conduct in public. 60-year-old Omara often sits with the other men in the evenings, but he always avoids drinking alcohol, for the sake of his health and to avoid fighting. Like Ladit, he said he always tries to advise the younger men to avoid alcohol and crime, and to take responsibility for their wives and children. He complained of recent developments undermining respect for elders amongst the younger generation, and the ‘increase’ in bayayes; 

In the past, as our parents were bringing us from childhood, we were so cooperative, and we were really very polite. Even the children kept on respecting the elders, not only your parents. And now slowly with the development coming in this country, of course things start changing. And we were having religions which we were following. Actually the religions we know Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism and Murokole (Born Again) - Murokole came late…. So we were trying to cooperate, and religion was also involved so the children were really so polite to each and everybody, it would become even very easy to teach them from school. But nowadays the change. The children coming up have their rights, women have their rights, in the long run you find that even they don’t respect their parents. It becomes so difficult, that’s why you find these bayayes, thieves, increasing in our country…

In line with some other participants, particularly older men, Omara finds ‘human rights’, a paradigm introduced in Uganda in his lifetime, to be at odds with the respect and relatedness he describes.

I have seen that they came up with something like the children should have their rights. People did not understand exactly what we call rights…the youth should know where to start and where to end. That’s their right. But they should also follow the regulations of the country and at the same time you need to respect the elders, it doesn’t mean that you can do anything with your rights without respecting your elders…

This depicts the relativism of how human rights are conceptualised, and how this is obscured in the imposition international standards that are assumed to be universal (Tamale, 2020, p. 192). During conversations, people might refer to seeking a ‘gender balance’ and ‘women’s empowerment’ in vague terms, as informed by various initiatives promoted by NGO and government. With others, like Omara, ‘rights’ were associated with a lack of discipline, family breakdowns and societal degradation. Tamale argues that international human rights discourses
are “alien to the continent” (ibid, p. 187), being founded on the protection of individual personhood and property, rather than communitarian interests and identities (ibid, p. 199). For many, as in the debates around the anti-homosexuality bill, the imposition of human rights discourses reflects long-standing colonial claims to power over morality in Uganda (Mamdani, M., 1996, p. xiii). As Doherty puts it, “[f]ar from a universal constant, the modern individual inscribed in liberal rights theory as indivisible, autonomous, self-sovereign, independent, and of equal moral status to all other individuals, is but one expression of personhood” (Doherty, 2020, p. 2). Tamale argues that ‘time-tested African concepts’ based on “social individuality” (Tamale, 2020, p. 204), reciprocity and interconnectedness, would offer a more relevant sense of personhood and vocabulary for seeking social justice and human dignity in African contexts. Certainly this would align with the fact that these values were a frequent, organic point of conversation throughout this research, in contrast with those of ‘equal rights’ or ‘women empowerment’.

Despite a sense of declining respect for elders and cooperation in the community around him, Omara frequently noted throughout our conversation that his sons are very respectful towards him. He worked to pay their school fees up to University, often relying on cooperation with others in the community, “in case I run short of something, I have to cry for help from fellow friends. They can help me with some money and later I can pay them back because money comes and goes.” He now knows that his sons will take care of him into his old age, just as they help him now with ‘dotcom’, by sending messages on WhatsApp for him and googling for answers about his health, “they can do everything for me, my children they respect me”. This reflects various insights outlined in chapter 5 which depict the use of phones to uphold respect and obligations to older relatives, as in Porter et al’s observation that young people become “family information hubs” (Porter et al., 2015), for example by connecting their parents to information and social networks online. Rather than invert the knowledge hierarchies of age, involvement of parents in ‘dotcom’ re-establishes respect. Furthermore, ‘dotcom’ allows people to uphold obligations to their elders, even ‘at a distance’. As an elder in Kitgum explained, “life’s easier now with phones”, as they are able to easily request assistance from relatives in the city.

Many participants in Lusozi explained how they support their parents health needs with mobile money transfers for transport to the hospital, hospital fees or costs of medicine and supplies.

Like many others, Omara commended Amor, having known her since childhood; “she is very good, good character, behavior and the rest. You see, if you don’t, people will not cooperate with you.” She greets people respectfully, takes time to talk to them and find out how they are. Omara
also identifies as a ‘good person’ himself: “[t]hey see how I talk to them, how I bring them closer to me, I can also help them the way I help them, so it shows this is a good person”. According to Omara and many other research participants, cooperation is something that can be seen or shown through helping others, talking to them in a certain way. This promotes a shared value of social harmony within the neighbourhood, preventing quarrels and promoting mutual assistance. As detailed in chapter 3, neighbours in Lusozi often intervene to support those in need, such as elderly people living alone or single grandmothers when they’re sick, providing food or raising contributions for medical needs. Good relationships with neighbours can also ensure regular business and supports those looking for work. Financial cooperation within the community is also the focus of chapter 4 on Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs), which provide people a collective mechanism in which to save, accumulate and borrow money, ‘making light the heaviness on an individual’. As a vocal proponent of showing cooperative ‘goodness’ with others in the community, Omara frequently returned to the subject of disagreements between neighbours, some with “different hearts”:

There are some situations here, disagreements with neighbours… We come, meet some friends, and we need to cooperate with them so that the cooperation would help us in one way or the other… You see, now, the cooperation, some people have different hearts, short tempered… I love all of them but in the long run others had some habits, you don’t know what is in their heart.

As everywhere, quarrelling between neighbours and relatives is common in Lusozi. But as a place of high population density and diversity, trust and mutual support are necessary to get by (Nyamnjoh, 2017), leaving suspicion and disagreements in their absence. Other peoples’ ‘heart’, their internal ‘goodness’ or intention towards others, can be difficult to determine from the outside. As with Omara, other participants similarly suspected their neighbours of resentment, jealousy and ‘bad heart’, which could often be related to witchcraft. Aliel Christine, a member of both Place of Peace and Angamalonyi, explained this further: ‘People from the face are happy, but you don’t know what’s in their heart. So people do witchcraft. In Lusozi, there’s a lot of witchcraft.’

In her work on phone use amongst young people in a Mozambican suburb, Archambault conceptualises the phone as a tool for publicly displaying respect and respectability, whilst disguising intimate pursuits which may deviate from moral ideals (Archambault, 2017, 2013). The phone is also a tool of appearance, the ‘conspicuous consumption’ of the material object itself
conferring social status (Archambault, 2017, p. 59), as reflected in Lusozi in the stories of phone theft outlined in this chapter. Archambault identifies that moral expectations are increasingly influenced by global media, including Pentecostalism, tourism, popular soaps and phone ownership, and that young people are “harnessing ICTs to address these contradictions” as members in a ‘globalized world’ (Archambault, 2013, p. 93). To an extent then, according to Archambault’s analysis, concealment of intimate practices also signifies respect, an understanding of what should be portrayed (Archambault, 2017, p. 20). This differs from the perceptions of participants like Omara and Aliel Christine, for whom concealment represents danger and uncertainty, a hidden discontent and an unknown ‘heart’. And there are more affinities here with Porter et al’s observation that many young people are ‘still concerned to uphold good relations across generations’ (Porter et al., 2015, p. 44), for example by helping their parents gain access to information via their phones, as with Omara’s sons. The smartphone, however, is evidently incorporated within intergenerational moral concerns. As shown in chapter 5 on the phone in Lusozi, younger people’s smartphone use, as well as the smartphones’ association with materialism and crime, is criticised by older people. They are concerned that exposure to norms ‘outside’, particularly norms of autonomy and excess, will undermine respect and togetherness, a concern which is consciously managed through appeals to their moral superiority.

Similarly, whilst again in a different African context, Kringelbach has noted that young women in urban Senegal manage the moral transgression of their transnational performance careers through showing generosity to their families or building up their public religious reputations. The “complexities of cultural ‘globalization’ processes” in a migration context, are played out in an “ambivalence between individual autonomy and the desire to be recognised as fully socialized person” (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 211). This moral ambivalence imparts a particular expectation on women to ‘outwardly comply’ with their social roles and ‘socialized’ personhood (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 213; see also Obbo, 1980, p. 15). Again, this is managed through public displays of respectability and cooperation with family.

When visible, rather than concealed, moral transgression can be publicly managed and resolved. During a visit with Amor’s family in her home village in Palabek, I witnessed an accusation of phone theft, and a ritual of retribution afterwards. This ritual is specific to northern Uganda, where conflict resolution can be publicly enacted, sometimes through formalised rituals (Allen, 2015, p. 366). As discussed in chapter 2, these rituals of community integration – mato opunt - have been the focus of much literature, with scholars and aid workers from the global North seeking to “promote healing in a culturally sensitive way” following the civil war (Whyte, 2016: 46). The
war is considered to be “the worst humanitarian crisis in human history” (Tamale, 2020: 157), with profound moral consequences (Porter, 2019). Efforts for the reconciliation of LRA returnees have been criticized for instrumentalising otherwise flexible practices and overlooking the heterogeneity of people’s perceptions about forgiveness (Whyte, 2016: 46; Allen, 2007). The story to follow is an example of ‘ordinary forgiveness’ (Whyte et al., 2016, p. 46), as it is demonstrated in practice, bringing to life many Acholi participants’ emphasis on the peacefulness of their people, their aversion to outward displays or quarrels, and their ability to resolve issues and conflicts. As Finnstrom puts it, rituals like ‘mato oput’ are “socially situated…called upon and performed to address present concerns” (Finnström, 2008, p. 299).

Amor could not find her smartphone after we had returned from washing in the river. She, and a few others, spent time looking around the house. The conversation with a clan elder who had visited kept returning to the issue of the phone and speculation as to its whereabouts. One of the younger men returned to the river to look for it. Amor was getting increasingly stressed, worried the battery would run out. The family sat in a circle, discussing the issue in Acholi at length. Suddenly, one of the women, Amor’s aunt, started crying, shouting and thumping her hands in the dirt. Amor’s Jaja, the clan leader and Kilongeni admonished her in turn, and she became increasingly frustrated. I surmised that the clan leader had asked her if she knew where Amor’s phone was, and she was trying to defend herself. Kilongeni and Amor were evidently conscious of my presence, apologising to me. Amor said, “let’s forget the issue of the phone, we have a project to do”; Kilongeni had planned a tour of the village and a meeting with a few elders. I went inside to pack a bag and found Amor’s phone tucked in my suitcase. The shouting continued outside, Jaja now seated in front of her house admonishing the woman from a distance. I took the phone outside and there was a shocked silence. The accused woman sobbed and ran to a bench under a tree at a distance, Amor following her. They talked quietly for about 10 minutes, Amor later explaining that she was asking her forgiveness.

I remained in the house preparing for our trip, and when I next came out the family had gathered outside the door. The woman, with a determined expression and tears still on her cheeks, bit into a piece of blackened wood, took a sip of water and blew pieces of the crushed wood on Amor, her baby and me, the three visitors. She then put some leaves into the mug of water and splashed the water on us. Amor laughed and said to me, “you see culture?”. Kilongeni then did the same on Amor’s behalf, explaining that this ritual of ‘mato oput’ is performed after each argument, and if people refuse, the next day they must try again. It serves a practical purpose, visibly ‘ending bitterness’ (Tamale, 2020, p. 160) and ‘untying knots in relationships’
(Whyte et al., 2016, p. 46) by enacting a ceremony of resolution and allowing families to move on from disagreements. Otherwise, “keeping something in the heart blocks the flow of relationships” and of life (Whyte et al., 2016, p. 46).

The clan leader, as the eldest man and therefore most senior person there, had nominated the accused woman for the first apology. She was considered most at fault for her reaction, as the thumping hands in the dirt was “too much”, her evident anger towards her elders and in front of visitors the greatest offence. As other Acholi participants explained, it is bad manners to talk back to your family, especially parents and older relatives; if you disagree, you’re supposed to wait and “give an explanation in a low tone” at the right time. In this instance, the explicit categorisation of morality is founded on disposition, visible public behaviours. This is then acknowledged through a symbolic display not of retribution, but of pragmatic reparation, restoration and reconciliation (Tamale, 2020, p. 157). The complex moral impact of economic inequities and differentiated access to smartphones is thus ‘publicly articulated’ in ways which re-establish cooperative priorities and family roles.

**Conclusion**

This chapter seeks to ground cooperative moralities of togetherness and respect in everyday interactions and public discourses. Goodness can be portrayed or discerned through disposition, deliberation; the vocabularies and idioms of ‘goodness’, the performance of respect for elders, the demonstration of generosity and care, the public condemnation of exploitation or disrespect. Morality can therefore go beyond the normative ‘script’ governing behaviour, or ‘pervasive and subliminal’ vision of how the world could and should be (Keane, W., 2016); it can also ‘have vitality’ (Das, 2015, p. 57), sometimes explicitly emerging through social action, exposed for ethnographic enquiry.

An ethical self is formed through displays of a ‘good heart’, an outward acknowledgement of *social individuality*, made visible through the manner of approach, a willingness to cooperate and show generosity. Even efforts towards collective benefit can be individually recognised and compensated (Englund, H, 2008). Perhaps my presence as a visitor encouraged these explicit definitions and depictions of goodness, or at least lent my eye and ear to them. Conversely, secrecy can conceal a ‘bad heart’, just as uncooperative behaviours can reveal one. As Omara put it, “you don’t know what is in their heart.” The unknowability of other people’s goodness can
explain interpersonal tensions, as well as broad social inequities, such as wealth disparities, political exploitation and an unwillingness to share. Within this wider uncooperative economic system, financial cooperation within Lusozi and across support networks represents livelihood as well as virtue, whilst theft, self-interest and exploitation threaten both. This exemplifies what Tamale describes as “the assault of Ubuntu by capitalism” (Tamale, 2020, p. 231), the economic threats posed to priorities of togetherness and respect.

Another competing moral vocabulary is found in that of human rights, based on a “possessive individualism” (Lambek, 2015, p. 30) alien to many non-Euro-American cultures. As Omara shows, this language is overheard and absorbed, even mandated, in tension with the respect and cooperation he grew up with (Das, 2015, p. 80). Both moral languages, of respect and rights, can be seen to both seek dignity and compassion, or reinforce social inequities and injustices, showing that they are not necessarily dichotomously opposed. Evidently, they can be manipulated for those who benefit from existing hierarchies, to re-establish the authority of older men for example, or the socio-economic dominance of the political elite. For example, whilst ‘human rights’ are intended as a language of liberation, to many scholars and participants, their imposition in Uganda, and in Africa more broadly, exemplifies coloniality, the intellectual arrogance of liberal Eurocentric ideologies in setting international standards (Tamale, 2020), overlooking the contextual specificity of moral vocabularies and therefore failing to alleviate inequities and suffering (Mutua, 2016; Tamale, 2020). At the same time, the concepts of ‘togetherness’ and ‘respect’ can serve the ‘reification of the traditional African family’ as a falsely homogenised, hetero-normative, patriarchal entity (Nyanzi, 2013; Porter, 2019; Tamale, 2020; Allen, 1988). A nuanced approach to existing cooperative moralities, which considers them to be lived and mutable, would arguably be a more effective way of addressing social oppressions and opening up possibilities. Likely many of the elders involved in this research would agree, as they visibly seek to up-hold their role of teaching the younger generation about togetherness and how to work together, amidst the many threats of the wider world.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Permanent Questions

In taking the lens of the smartphone to understand experiences of ageing in Lusozi, Kampala, this ethnography presents the articulation and practice of ‘togetherness in the dotcom age’. This draws from these vernacular concepts of cooperative morality and modernity to consider the description, impact and mitigation of wide-reaching, complex socio-economic changes on experiences and expectations of ageing. Dotcom is understood to encompass everything from the influence of ICTs, especially phones, to lifestyles in the city, to profound shifts in ways of knowing and relating. Whilst dotcom is familiar to people around the world, specifically here in Lusozi Godown, how does it manifest in relation to older people’s health, their care norms, their social standing, their moral values based on respect and relatedness, and their intergenerational relationships both political and personal? And what can be learnt both anthropologically and more broadly from the re-establishment of cooperative values in everyday life?

This focus on the concept of togetherness seeks to align with the aspirations stated by many older participants involved in this research: to fulfil their role of advising the younger generation about how to work together, despite the many uncertainties of the dotcom era. A quote from an interview with a 60-year-old woman called Achola opens this book. Despite not having had children herself, she is a mother to many children, including her own orphaned nephews and nieces, ‘they are lucky because I am here’. Her narration of her hopes and efforts towards their future outlined in chapter 6, her own deferred aspirations, and her management of these pressures, expresses an intergenerational and intersubjective purpose in life. When we introduced the project to her, she said she had no questions because she felt ‘the book will help my grandchildren’, as she won’t always be here to teach them. We asked what she would most hope that they would learn from the book, and she said she wants them to read it and know how to help each other; ‘even if you’re not from the same place, you stay together’. Like many other older participants in Lusozi, she sees that as her role, to educate the younger generation based on her life experience, and particularly about the importance of ‘staying together’.

Values of ‘togetherness’ are often perceived to be under threat. 78-year-old Aprio Evelyn, who we spoke with in her home village outside Gulu in the Acholi sub-region, worries for the next generation, and sees the many problems that they face. ‘If I could give them any advice, it would be to make sure that they work together. That is how we used to live, but now I find everyone
working on their own’. The emphasis on working together reflects the Acholi practice of ‘pur aleya’, communal farming, as described by Ladit, in which work parties or ‘awak’ of 30 or more people would dig up to three gardens by hand in one day, to “reduce the amount of time spent digging by an individual”. As Girling observed in his 1960 ethnography in Acholiland, awak provides a pragmatic arrangement to ensure everyone’s field is dug in “the short time available for planting after dry season and before the rains” (Girling, 2014, p. 71). This exemplifies what Nyamnjoh describes as ‘logic of collective action’ (Nyamnjoh, F., 2002, p. 115), through which individual endeavours are collectivised, whilst both collective and individual interests are served.

This social ‘logic’ is not only located in the past, in the village or with elders; it is also continually brought to life through everyday conversation and practice in the city, and towards aspirations for ‘moral community’ and participation in the contemporary ‘world order’ (Karlström et al., 2004, p. 209). We saw this in chapter 2, with what Ladit has provided for young people in Lusozi, by sharing his knowledge about traditional Acholi music and dance and adapting it for relevance to their lives in Kampala today. As Obalo, another Acholi elder in Lusozi, put it, song is like ‘our book, our way of recording an event’, lessons to be shared with the generations to follow. Ladit’s group has taught young people about “the ways of their ancestors” and at the same time paid for their school education and offered social mobility (see short film in Figure 2.2, ‘Ladit’). As in p’Bitek’s work, song represents an “appeal to the renewal of traditional ways” whilst accommodating “full self-expression” (p’Bitek, 1984, p. 298). As Kringelbach puts it in her study of dance performance and ‘self-fashioning’ in urban Senegal, dance ‘makes urban personhood’ “with an eye to the regions beyond” (Kringelbach, 2013, p. 211), forging belonging whilst fulfilling individual ambitions. The weekly practice of Ladit’s group provides a place for people from across the diverse community to congregate, particularly young children, who also come to watch and learn. Evidently, traditions are made dynamic and flexible, lived meaningfully in the present and across generations (Finnström, 2008, p. 51). This counters the colonial reification of custom or it’s attribution to a ‘romanticised past’ (Mamadani, 2012,1996; p’Bitek, 1986). In this fluidity, the explicit articulation and practice of values like togetherness holds the potential to enable social possibilities and fulfil aspirations for the future (Tamale, 2020). An emphasis on the processes through which values are made present, brought to life meaningfully, rather than inscribed in the past (Mamadani, 2012,1996; p’Bitek, 1986; Finnström, 2008) or in a reified traditional family (Nyanzi, 2013), can also support an imagination of social possibilities, an idea we will return to later.
The sociality of work was also evident in chapter 3, which demonstrates the significance of social and domestic life for many older participant’s heterogenous businesses and working routines, often based with proximity to the household and the Lusozi neighbourhood. The majority of research participants and 78% of the workforce in Kampala run their own trade businesses in what’s known as the ‘informal sector’, officially unregistered and unsupported by the state, but in fact intrinsic to it (Wallman and Baker, 1996, p. 672). For example, market vendors pay taxes to Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) as ‘ground rent’, rely on taxed mobile money transfers and phone calls (Larsson and Svensson, 2018), and provide access to customers for established consumer chains, as a ‘hub’ of the economy (Hart, 1985, p. 57). And boda boda taxi drivers, a ‘vital but pathologised’ profession (Doherty, 2017; Wanume, P. Nduhura, A. Mugerwa, B. Bagambe, H. Ninsiima, J., 2019), are strategically regulated by central government to support election campaigns (Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012). And of particular significance to this research, the incomes of older research participants often support many other people in their families, across generations and distances, paying school fees and sending remittances to rural areas, often for older relatives’ health needs. These ‘distributed livelihoods’ constitute the wider socioeconomic dynamics, “the human economy” (Ferguson, 2015, p. 90, cf Hart et al, 2010).

In this ‘human economy’ and the uncertain, entrepreneurial economic environment of Lusozi, a strong social support system is an advantage. Mutual support within households and across the family and neighbourhood is depicted by participants as the ‘pro-social’ and pragmatic mitigation of the lack of public investment in social welfare, often characterised as neglectful, extractive, immoral and ‘anti-social’ (Ferguson, 2006, p. 74). As Kato, a 61-year-old former civil engineer put it, “They get a lot of money, but they can’t assist the people, that’s the problem here. It’s just for the people at the top”. Having lost his business due to an injury, he meets with other men in Lusozi to consider the problems faced by people in the community, to seek work, and play games, “we combine knowledge and see how we can survive…we’re gambling now”. Kato considers their community-oriented perspective superior to that of the Ugandan government, who impose taxation without helping people. Various self-employed participants including boda boda drivers, market, mobile money and street vendors also described the significance of good relationships with suppliers, customers, neighbours and family to overcome competitive and unstable markets. Similarly, work, business and job-seeking is often labelled as “gambling”, depicting required risks and precarity, and an implicit willingness to improvise in response (Malaby, 2009, p. 206). With the social and economic productivity of gambling and playing games also indicated by some participants, the boundary between work and play is further blurred (ibid). Often unmentioned though is the reliance of businesses on unpaid labour such as
domestic work from live-in maids and the care labour of women, including self-care practices which avert medical costs and time away from work; “the ultimate privatisation of health” (Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996, p. 143).

Overall, by focusing on older participant’s everyday working routines, chapter 3 disrupts the stereotype of work in the capital city as a preoccupation of able-bodied youth (Nyanzi, 2009), and typical industrialised categories of age and work: childhood and education, adulthood and work, older age and retirement (Honwana, 2012, p. 12). Age-based migration, the widely stated preference and expectation to return to rural homes for rent-free rest and retirement in later life, is delayed until school fees are paid and enough money saved. This suggests that ‘waithood’ in urban economies is not just for youth (Thieme, 2018) but is a shared experience across generations. This has implications for health and social protection, as people get older and rely on their physical health to sustain their livelihood, leading to recommendations for the targeted inclusion of older people in national health insurance schemes, especially those continuing to work in the city without income protection (Bukuluki and Mubiru, 2014, p. 55) whilst contributing to the economy and providing ‘distributed livelihoods’ for their families (Ferguson, 2015, p. 90). Otherwise, work can pose risk to physical health, whilst declining physical health decreases capacity to work, risking livelihoods as well as the possibility of ‘catastrophic’ out-of-pocket health expenditure (Baine et al., 2018).

The distribution of resources within the Lusozi community was also the focus of chapter 4, which is based on participation in the regular meetings of three community groups, including two SACCOs (Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations) and a Church-based NGO for single mothers. In Ribe Aye Teko Organisation or ‘RATO’ (Togetherness is Strength), a SACCO predominantly for men which I joined as a member, regular savings are collected to provide a fund for people to turn to “in times of grievance and of happiness”. As explained by the Vice Chairman of the group, “[w]e thought we should come together to form an association and make light the heaviness on one person”. At their Sunday meetings, discussions often revolved around late contributions and loan repayments, and whether the group should respond ‘kindly’, in line with the original intention of the group and existing friendships between members, or ‘constitutionally’, in line with the formalised duties to participate and pay contributions. This reveals the tensions of communal capital, and of cooperation ‘formalised-from-below’ (Krige, 2019), demonstrating the everyday complexities of collectively striving for individual gain.
Participation in this group, as well as in a rotating savings group called Angamalonyi or ‘Who should enrich you?, (‘yourselves, together’), showed how cooperative moralities are enacted both despite and because of the ‘monetisation’ of the economy and social life (Otto et al., 2013, p. 29). This supports anthropologist Ardener’s contestation of Geertz’ assertion that savings groups, specifically rotating funds, are a “rung on the ladder between agrarian and modern economies” (Geertz, 1962; ref Green, 2019). Savings groups and rotating schemes continue to proliferate under global capitalism (Ardener and Burman, 1995) and are evidently permeated by the tensions of capitalist market logics. In Angamalonyi, for example, the beneficiary members organise their party, including outfits, decorations, refreshments, and attendants; this can cause competition and put additional financial pressures on lower-income members. However, the Chairwoman of Angamalongyi is glad that the group has provided incentive for the women to dress smartly and express themselves, and the weekly parties of rotating contributions and dancing are joyful occasions in the heart of Lusozi every Sunday. Other members explained how the group has allowed them to have fun, gain friendships, and forget their problems at home, all whilst supporting their household. As Aliel, a long-standing member of the group, explained: ‘Every week in and week out, we are always very happy. Even if you leave your home with some anger, when you reach there, joy starts coming out of you...Angamalonyi is like my father, mother and sister which brings people to associate together.’ Similarly, members of Place of Peace, an NGO for single mothers, said they found “sisters, even mothers” at their regular meetings, a kin-like network in their neighbourhood to offer mutual guidance and belonging in line with the organisations’ mission statement: “the person who belongs becomes a protagonist… belonging to somebody else, you become free.” The successes of all three groups in fostering belonging and self-sufficiency, despite the tensions between the two, mirrors Nyamnjoh’s concept of convivial social action in multi-ethnic urban settings in Africa, offering a predetermined framework through which individuals can become self-reliant (Nyamnjoh, 2017, p. 261). The relevance of this concept of conviviality to the research setting, interests, methodology and ethical approach will be outlined below.

As demonstrated in the savings groups, money can be embedded in social relations and inflected with moral qualities (Bloch M, Parry J., 1989, p. 8). With contributions of money raised amongst the family and community at a time of celebration or crisis, including costly burials at home, money as a gift or gesture can even be ‘imbued with sacred qualities’ (Zelizer, 2018). This is further exemplified in chapter 5 on phone use, in which cooperative moralities are transmitted through mobile money transfers, for example those facilitating the health care of older relatives living at home in the village. This shows that smartphones and mobile phones are facilitating not
only the expansion of individualism, selfishness, and consumerism, as in dominant narratives, but also the expansion of the relationships and expectations that came before. In this way, whilst compressing distances in unprecedented ways, “bringing the world together”, and often therefore conceptualised as “highly significant agents of change” (Vokes, 2018, p. 276), smartphones and mobile phones evidently also reproduce existing relationships. What one participant described as the “dotcom wave” thus becomes domesticated in Lusozi, the wave being an apt metaphor for the overwhelming, processual mutability of social trajectories, which phone use is both shaping of and shaped by.

Chapter 5 on phone use therefore builds on work in digital anthropology on the appropriation of digital tools like phones according to socio-cultural preferences (Horst and Miller, 2012, 2006), particularly in Africa (de Bruijn et al., 2009; Porter et al., 2015; Pype, K., 2017; Archambault, 2013) and in Uganda particularly (Burrell, 2010; Namatovu and Saebo, 2015; Svensson and Wamala Larsson, 2016; Vokes, 2018), in turn offering insight into processes of continuity and change more broadly (de Bruijn et al., 2009; Horst and Miller, 2013, 2013; Miller, D. et al., 2016; Vokes, 2018). In particular, the ethnography offers the overlooked perspective of the ‘middle generation’, neither young nor elderly but often with care responsibilities for both, on the ‘intergenerational implications’ (Porter et al., 2015, p. 38) of the phone. This is particularly pertinent in the contemporary political context of Uganda, where discourses about the corrupting influences of ‘dotcom’ on the younger generation are also reflected and reinforced in policy regulations such as the controversial social media tax. These regulations implicate the potential of social media both as a tool and symbol of the emancipation of young people, and disempowerment of the old. Despite this widespread intergenerational discourse about ‘dotcom’ amongst politicians and participants alike, as well as extensive academic research about the declining experience of older people in East Africa (Aboderin, 2004; Maharaj, 2020; Maniragaba et al., 2019; Nankwanga et al., 2013; Nzabona et al., 2016; Oppong, 2006; Whyte, 2017), it is perhaps surprising to see the extent to which people enact respect and care for their elders via the (smart)phone, a crucial icon of dotcom and the foremost platform for accessing social media in Uganda: as in the examples of ‘care at a distance’ (Ahlin, 2018; Kamwesiga et al., 2017; Pols, 2012) for older relatives in rural areas, but also in younger people’s efforts to share ‘dotcom’ knowledge with their parents, by buying them phones, teaching them how to use them, keeping them connected on social media, looking up information, and even sourcing music and entertainment for them. As 61-year-old Omara explained of his adult sons
“The world is changing. everything is computerised so we need to know... Dotcom, that one came after us… now we’re trying to get at that thing from you (young) people, ‘now Dotcom, what does it mean?’. We learn also from them. I ask my sons, so I can be doing it myself. He can do everything for me...my children, they respect me…in case I need anything they can do it for me.”

Omara teaches his sons to learn as much as they can about ‘dotcom’. Others agree with Omara, that the typical pedagogical relationship between fathers and sons is thereby both inverted and sustained in the ‘dotcom era’, and dotcom knowledge amongst younger people does not necessarily come at the expense of respect for the older generation. In their study of intergenerational encounters via the phone across 24 fieldsites in sub-Saharan Africa, Porter et al have similarly found young people to be “family information hubs” (Porter et al., 2015, p. 44), noting the ‘intensity of cross-generational phone interactions’ (ibid, 40). Despite ‘disquiet’ amongst elders about disruption to age-based knowledge hierarchies, this demonstrates an ongoing commitment to upholding good relations across the generations (ibid, 44). Furthermore, the phone provides a “lifeline” for relationships and resources across distances (ibid, 41); sometimes extending unwanted obligations, sometimes an imperfect but tolerable replacement for the long and costly journeys between urban and rural areas, as for example between Kampala and Kitgum, where most participants’ rural homes are based. When phone calls and mobile money remittances are used for health purposes, as this research has shown is often the case, this can be understood as an ‘informal mHealth’ strategy, recently identified as a “large-scale emergent health system” in itself (Hampshire et al., 2021, p. 3). Family roles, or what Cati Coe terms ‘family repertoires’ - “ways of speaking, thinking, and feeling about the family that mobilize material resources and people in ways that are considered normal and natural” (Coe, 2014, p. 5) - are thus reconfigured, despite generational shifts, economic change and increasingly ‘scattered families’ (Coe, 2014; Sigona et al., 2015, p. 131).

Reconfigurations of care responsibilities for older people are further detailed in chapter 6. This includes discussions about the contested roles of the government, the hospital, health workers, relatives and especially daughters, and the older individual themselves. These discussions are particularly pertinent given the increasing numbers of older people, the devastation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic which killed many of their children (Nankwanga et al., 2013), the economic situation hindering access to resources, and the declining accessibility of home-based intergenerational care. The latter ideal of elder care forms a benchmark against which alternatives are presented. In Lusozi, the few elderly people being cared for at home are typically financially
supported by sons, and physically and emotionally supported by daughters, as per the typical gendered divisions of care labour (Gertrude et al., 2019; Wallman and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 1996). Otherwise, elderly parents living at home in rural areas can be supported by care responsibilities delegated amongst siblings, depending on their proximity, gender and income levels, and often facilitated by remittances, family WhatsApp groups and phone calls to request financial support. Alternative arrangements include hired domestic care-workers, or grandchildren sent home to rural areas to help their grandparents with daily chores whilst gaining cheaper schooling. Coe and Alber call these alternative arrangements ‘age-inscriptions’ (Coe and Alber, 2018), which refers to a patterned adaptation to changing socio-economic circumstances in line with established discursive ideals of elder care.

Another significant ‘age-inscription’ observed in Lusozi is the evidence that many older participants in their 40s, 50s and 60s care for their own health and finances in order to avoid ‘becoming a burden’ on their children’s already stretched time and resources. This ‘self-care’ includes exercise routines, strategies to manage physical work, healthy eating habits, avoiding unprotected sex and stress or ‘overthinking’. Self-responsibility is particularly explicit in three single (grand)mothers’ narrations of their prayer routines to manage hypertension or ‘pressure’, commonly understood as absorbed economic stress through ‘over-thinking’; as shown, it is considered their individual responsibility to ‘stop over-thinking’ about financial pressures, to manage and re-articulate an excess of thoughts in order to preserve their own health, well-being and therefore social productivity. As Achola says of her worries about her children and her future old age, ‘I feel that, what am I going to be when I reach up to 70, 80 years? I will be old, I cannot dig or carry water, so what can I do? If I go to Church and pray, the thinking reduces’. The process implicated in these descriptions of prayer as a way of managing uncertainty closely illustrates Jackson’s conception of the intersubjective process of ‘internalisation, articulation, production and reproduction’ between mutually interdependent individual and others, particular and universal, which prioritises the shared meanings ‘in-between’, the ways stories are told and how they are lived (Jackson, 1998, p. 6). In relation to the learnings from this ethnography, this might refer to how people express an understanding of their role within a family; how they explicitly enact ‘goodness’ in accordance with expectations; how they tell stories of the past, the global or the political to characterise the present, here and now. Shared meanings can represent the ‘search for ontological security’, a “degree of control over the forces of destiny” (ibid, p. 71: see also Finnstrom, 2006: 52), exposed within a shifting context. As Susan Whyte showed in her ethnography in Eastern Uganda, this also makes the dialogue, idioms and stories related to managing uncertainty ‘in-the-world’ particularly useful modes of ethnographic enquiry (Whyte,
In these ethnographic instances, intersubjective personhood is shown to determine individual responsibility, with the “oughtness” (Park and Akello, 2017) of self-care as an act of care for others. This ethnography therefore complicates the established observation that ‘ageing well’ in East Africa is defined by interdependence with family, contrasted dichotomously with independence and self-sufficiency as in the Global North (Lamb, 2017; McIntosh, T., 2017; Schatz and Seeley, 2015; Susan Whyte, 2017). However, various participants did criticise the institutionalisation of older people in care homes that they had heard about in the UK, thought to be like prisons, a “social imagination” of elder care elsewhere (Coe, 2019; Coe, C., 2020) against which the preference for home-based family care is re-established. A few health workers and age NGO workers observed that people prefer to abandon older relatives rather than institutionalise them, and there are some older people in Lusozi known to have been left to rely on themselves and their neighbours. Health institutions, including the hospital in Lusozi, often fall short of expectations for the care of older people, who tend to feel overlooked by service provision, as stressed by various older participants and their relatives, as well as health workers and hospital administrators. Family are expected to make up this shortfall, as promoted by the Head of Community Health at Lusozi hospital during community outreach programmes: “every family must be able to take care”. Family responsibilities and moral obligations are thus emphasised in line with the marketisation, medicalisation and individualisation of health; as shown by other medical anthropologists (e.g. Han, 2012; Kehr, J., 2018; Kleinman, 2015; Muehlebach, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2017), this represents the “broadest moral contradiction, ambivalence and hybridity of our social and political world today” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 199).

In this way, broad socio-political and demographic concerns, such as population growth, restrictions on public welfare and social security, and the influence of western care norms, are implicated in the personal and embodied experiences of health and care in later life, a tension often expressed by participants. The hospital administrator, for example, notes the “pressures of globalisation” responsible for turning a once more communitarian outlook inward, towards immediate family within the household.

Participants actively reflect on these paradoxes, the risks and opportunities of increased global connectivity, as encapsulated in the discourses around ‘dotcom’. At this narrow intersection between individual and others, everyday life and politics (Jackson, 1998b), the subject of ageing with smartphones can therefore expose discourses and procedures regarding the making of
moral personhood, particularly in relation to intergenerational expectations and care. In the anthropology of morality, and as observable in this research, conflicting moral frameworks are shown to elicit active moral reflection (Lambek, Das, Fassin, Keane, 2015; Robbins, 2007; Zigon, 2007). Robbins (2007) has studied this phenomenon with the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, whose ‘relatively new’ Pentecostal values of individual salvation conflict with a longer-standing relational personhood. This contributes to a ‘moral breakdown’, a point at which ethics become explicit and performed, rather than implicit and unreflective (Zigon, 2007: 137). Perhaps this also explains the active reflection on cooperative morality or ‘togetherness’ in Lusozi, perceived to be under threat by competing influences of autonomous individualism; Pentecostalism, human rights discourses, liberalised social security, ‘development’ and capitalism, education and dotcom media. Furthermore, many participants originated in northern Uganda, meaning they have lived through the 20-year civil war, considered to be “the worst humanitarian crisis in human history” (Tamale, 2020, p. 157), with profound moral consequences (Porter, 2019). This wider context is therefore characterising a sense of an on-going ‘moral moment’ in Lusozi, a time at which ‘goodness’ is consciously defined, discussed and displayed, made visible for ethnographic enquiry, as also evident in the extent of studies of the ‘moral moment’ in Uganda (Allen, 2015; Baral, 2016; Boyd, 2013; Doherty, 2020; Finnström, 2008; Karlstrom, 2004; Kyaddondo, D., 2008; Monteith, 2018; Tamale, 2020; Whyte et al., 2016). Moral reflections are evident in chapters throughout the thesis and consolidated in chapter 7, in which ethnographic observations illustrate an anthropological concept of morality based on ‘ethical self-formation’ (Englund, H, 2008: 45), as emerging through everyday articulations and practices of cooperation. A cooperative personhood is formed by being seen to visibly up-hold respect and relatedness, for example through manners of greeting older people, or of older people’s respectable conduct. Conversely, secrecy or an uncooperative manner can portray a ‘bad heart’. For example, suspicions of a neighbour’s involvement in witchcraft can explain quarrels, as well as sudden misfortune or wealth. Following Geschiere’s theorising on witchcraft in Africa and the inherent dangers of intimate sociality, this ambivalence may in turn reflect threats to cooperative distribution across social networks, offering an explanation for inequalities in the world market (Geschiere, 2013).

At these global and intimate intersections, where competing moral frameworks and re-articulations of ‘togetherness’ are exposed, is the hegemony of imperial Euro-American economies, religions and ways of knowing. As Nyamnjoh puts it, in ‘dynamically adapting to the challenging contemporary context of western inspired modernity’, “interdependence is not just ‘pushed aside’, but continually promoted through conviviality amidst diverse worldviews”
This concept of ‘conviviality’ builds on the semantics of celebration and togetherness, the Latin root of the word ‘con’ (together) and ‘vivo’ (to live), later combined to describe feast or festivity. ‘Conviviality’ has earlier been used as a sociological concept to describe the everyday ways people invoke, celebrate and preserve difference in diverse, multi-ethnic urban settings (Gilroy, 2009), as in Lusozi. Phones, as platforms of communication with democratising and open-ended potential, have been theorised as ‘tools for conviviality’ (Illich, 1973). As an analytical approach, employed in this monograph, ‘conviviality’ allows for an exploration of how people create “modes of togetherness” (Nowicka and Vertovec, 2014, p. 2), how they envision living together and the strategies used to practice it. As a methodological tool, conviviality seeks “holism through compassion” (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 79), emphasising on-going dialogue, co-production, collaboration and humility, which Nyamnjoh shows is of particular significance to ‘the future of anthropology in Africa’ (ibid, p.84).

In contrast with the “neoliberal, White-centric/supremacist, binary/Cartesian, intellectually-arrogant, depoliticizing” brand of dominant western thought (Tamale, 2020, p. 7), convivial scholarship ‘celebrates and preserves incompleteness’ as a site of possibility and considers epistemological completeness delusory, futile and even harmful (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Anthropology itself has played a role in informing the British colonisers about how to politically subjugate in the most culturally appropriate way, contributing directly and indirectly to the reification of customs, of hetero-patriarchal family norms, of fabricated borders and divisions, of appalling global socioeconomic disparities, of forced global immobility, and of exclusionary academic and linguistic hierarchies (Imbo, 2002; Mamadani, 2012; Nyanzi, 2013; Tamale, 2020). Amongst participants, these hierarchies are discussed in relation to the declining value of older people’s knowledge, in line with the “dotcom wave” and an increasing emphasis on school education.

With the weight of this past and its impact on the present, there is a responsibility to actively reflect on the ways that knowledge is produced and reproduced through research today (Ese-osa Idahosa and Bradbury, 2020, p. 42). Convivial scholarship offers a framework for ‘destabilising Eurocentric notions of validity and legitimacy’, and instead ‘promoting multiple ways of knowing’ (ibid, p. 45). Often, as seen throughout the research, politically informed discussions about power and knowledge can also be elitist, taking place in lecture halls and galleries, but failing to reach those in communities like Lusozi, or taking informed account of their perspectives. It is therefore important to address the implications of coloniality, including racism and sexism underpinning capitalism today, especially through the terms in which they are
significant to research participants. This is evident here in cited dialogue about ‘westernisation’, the imposition of values such as through human rights and ‘dotcom’, the pervasiveness of political and economic inequities, and the failures of education and development. Throughout, participants, the most qualified theorists of their own social reality, have referred to how this ongoing history characterises what social life should be and what it is.

Nyamnjoh asks, “what role could less restrictive epistemologies play in education and development?” (Nyamnjoh, 2012). Convivial research is a “quest for knowledge in its complexity and nuance” (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Boundaries of neat categories and stereotypes are blurred in place of ambiguity. In this monograph for example, preconceptions related to older age activities are complicated, with observations in chapter 3 related to work in the city in later life, otherwise stereotyped as an occupation of youth. Categories of age are shown to be socially negotiable, rather than being chronological or fixed. When applying this ‘nuance and complexity’ to practical paradigms such as policy, education or health services, the aim is often to better accommodate people’s everyday lived realities, and to alleviate the inequities which can be seen to perpetually reproduce themselves and constrain people’s life chances.

Convivial scholarship therefore seeks to challenge inequities and imagine alternative social possibilities. This thesis has outlined the many disparities people negotiate to access health, digital tools and education. These disparities are evidently informed by various, interlinked and historically determined social and economic factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class, geography, income, education, physical health and ability. For example, as we saw in chapter 5 on phone use, older women are the least likely to have access to smartphones and their capacities, particularly given the gap in education for people of this age group and gender. Barriers to accessing the ‘digital capital’ of phones and the capacity to use them thus also present a barrier to other forms of capital (Hampshire et al., 2015, p. 98), such as education and health, reproducing existing inequities. And as in chapter 6 on health and care, older women are also most likely to have multiple care responsibilities, which both puts ‘pressure’ on their own health and prevents them from seeking support as they would for other members of their families.

Through ethnography, which seeks to hear from their perspectives, it’s possible to consider how these inequities are experienced and managed in everyday life. Convivial, cross-disciplinary collaborations with service providers and policy makers can seek to better accommodate these experiences, to meet people where they are. As scholar-activist and medical anthropologist Stella Nyanzi argued in her research with older widows in Kampala, “The elderly must be involved in policymaking and programme design processes because their voice does not get ‘muted’ with
age. They understand their circumstances well, and can best articulate it for themselves” (Nyanzi, 2009). Like Tamale’s definition of decoloniality, convivial scholarship and research “entail processes that value, reclaim and foreground Indigenous voices and ways of knowing” (Tamale, 2020, p. 280-1). This includes taking people’s experiences, and ways of understanding the world seriously, particularly perceptions otherwise overlooked into account (ibid). As with Nyanzi’s vision of a ‘queer African scholarship’, the hope is then that exposure to knowledge generated with and by voices often “muted” (Nyanzi, S., 2015, p. 134; Obbo, 1980, p. 1), such as those of non-heteronormative people or older women, can ‘infuse’ and ‘diffuse’ greater understanding and empathy of the experiences of others (Nyanzi, S., 2015, p. 134). As Obbo earlier argued, the ‘private goals, behaviours and attitudes’ of women have wide-reaching political implications, and should therefore be taken seriously in anthropological research (Obbo, 1980, p. 15) which ideally ‘lets people speak for themselves’ (ibid, 2). Both Obbo and Nyanzi’s assertions imply a gradual but wide-reaching process of storytelling, knowledge distribution and incorporation. As they both show in their work, research can also be applied directly to service or policy recommendations, such as those suggesting that school fees are abolished for poor widows (Nyanzi, 2011, p. 314). Advocacy which seeks to open up social possibilities for those marginalised, excluded or otherwise oppressed can employ ‘time-tested’ (Tamale, 2020, p. 232) languages, such as those of ‘togetherness’ and ‘respect’, rather than imposing Euro-centric or elitist languages of ‘rights’ and ‘development’. Just as ‘convivial’ values are lived, articulated and practiced, taken beyond an idealised past for relevance to life in the city, they can be employed to imagine alternative futures, for example to address the oppressive economic status quo and seek social justice for women and LGBTQ+ people (Tamale, 2020, p. 233).

This has implications beyond Lusozi. The sense that social ideals must grapple with contemporary realities, what social life should be like versus what it is, is a familiar conversation around the world. Often, moral standards are associated with the past, as a time of purer, more authentic interconnection between people. Exposure to ‘family repertoires’ elsewhere in the world can form another point of comparison for re-establishing or disrupting existing roles and expectations. In this vein, dotcom tools are often characterised as divisive, whilst also employed as a platform for togetherness, across distances and generations. This is particularly pertinent during on-going covid-19 restrictions. If the pandemic has shown us anything, it is that we are all inextricably connected, and that this can paradoxically determine individual isolation, meaning that we are all implicated in the health and care of others. Following the advice and actions of elders in Lusozi, it is possible to negotiate difficulty and difference with conviviality, facilitate
both mutual obligation and self-determination, revere the past and enrich the future, and up-hold togetherness in the dotcom age.
Endnotes

https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03_20182016_UNHS_FINAL_REPORT.pdf, p.3. This reflects similar proportions of the population by age found in the census.
https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=UG
vii Emphasis from original source.
viii Reference concealed to preserve the anonymity of the research location.
ix As above.
x Note that this description is pre-covid. Some lockdown regulations, which were particularly strict at the start of the pandemic in 2020, are on-going at the time of writing in 2021. This includes a curfew, which means boda journeys should end before 6pm and people must be at home at 9pm or face fines and even violence. Low-income neighbourhoods have been particularly affected by police violence and persecution.
xii There is a story of two brothers, Gipir and Gifol, who had a conflict that they were unable to resolve. Gipir then moved to live on the West bank of the Nile, which is thought to be the origins of Alur people as separate from Acholi. I was sometimes told the story to evoke the similarities between Alur and Acholi people, who share a common language and ancestry. Okot p’Bitek wrote that it is “a vivid story that explained” the separation of the Luo rulers in Alur from the rest of the Luo peoples in Bunyoro and Acholi, and thus also established a strong link between them.” (p’Bitek, 1970). Whyte, Meinert and Obika (Whyte et al., 2016) also wrote on the significance of the story’s message about the consequences of refusing forgiveness.
https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/uganda
xxvii ibid, p.28.
xxix ibid, p.21.
Historically, if a man dies, his wife would be ‘inherited’ by his brothers in a levirate marriage, although I met many older women who had refused this arrangement, suggesting that in recent decades it is not commonly upheld.

See also Uganda based activists nowhitesaviors.

Notably, this is not to the exclusion of extraordinary events that participants care about, such as interpersonal conflicts, contemporary political movements or experiences during the war.

These have been redacted for the purposes of this e-thesis to preserve participants’ anonymity.

This project has included a collaboration with ‘the Medical Concierge Group’, a leading digital health organisation in Uganda. At the time of the research, they were interested in formative insights related to mental health perceptions, experiences and treatment preferences. This research has been consolidated in collaborative articles (Haykins et al., 2020: others pending publication) which have informed successful grant-seeking efforts for the evaluation of a pilot tele-psychiatry project in Kampala.


Livingston has also shown how physical infirmity is particularly associated with wisdom, authority and proximity to ancestors in Botswana, suggestive of a capacity to give blessings or curses (2003: 212).

Elsewhere, this social and spiritual power of elderly women derived from their experience has also been associated with fear, suspicion, and a resulting precarity and marginality, as shown in Livingston’s work in Botswana (2003: 226), in Pype’s work in Kinshasha (2017: 162). Finnstrom has also shown that Acholi women in general are considered to be particularly exposed to spiritual forces and therefore dangerous (Finnstrom, 2008:184).

The expectation to greet older people or men by kneeling did not apply to me as a visitor. If we entered someone’s home, Amor would enter on her knees, but I would be instructed to remain upright.
The Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) National Labour Force Survey (NLFS) 2016/17 found youth unemployment in Uganda, those aged 18-30 who are actively looking for a job, at 13%, one of the highest rates in Sub-Saharan Africa; many more, 38%, are 'under-employed'.

Thanks to HelpAge Uganda for taking the time to meet and discuss this research on SAGE.


UBOS, 2018: 142.

Ibid.


A similar list of activities was given by Southall and Gutkind in their 1963 ethnography in Kampala, although notably excluding mobile vending services.


At the time of writing in May 2020, mobile money tax had been suspended due to on-going lockdown measures in Uganda.

Porter et al have conducted a systematic review to determine the health implications of ‘head-loading’ (Porter et al., 2013), a common practice across sub-Saharan Africa for carrying heavy loads such as water, fuel and as in this case, wares for sale, particularly amongst women and children. They identified potential risks to: energy, degenerative injury, acute injury, reproductive health and psychosocial impact.


Due to the economic challenges following the covid-19 pandemic, meetings are less well-attended as members cannot afford to spend the time away from work.

Related film removed to preserve anonymity of the group and the research location.

This could be related to Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship and the good (found in Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII), and the idea that mutual awareness offers growth. See also: J.M. Cooper, ‘Aristotle on Friendship’, in Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics, ed. A. Rorty (Berkely, CA: University of California Pres, 1980), 301-40.


UCC, 2016.


Covid-19 restrictions are also thought to have precipitated considerable up-take of smartphones across the country, particularly amongst youth.


Nyamnjoh has previously related government media control in Africa to the colonial origins of print and radio, which would promote western interests and prevent dissidence (Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 45).

Bobi Wine. 2018. ‘Museveni is as good as his word’. Accessed 4th April 2019. https://w.soundcloud.com/player/?url=https%3A//api.soundcloud.com/tracks/342295943&color=%23ff5500&autoplay=false&amp;amp;hide_related=false&amp;amp;show_comments=true&amp;amp;show_user=true&amp;amp;show_reposts=false&amp;amp;visual=true.


See introduction for demographic data

This ‘pluralistic’ approach to treatment-seeking is also evident amongst older people in other ASSA project fieldsites around the world: for example, in Ireland, Miller found that his participants would often seek treatment based on their more holistic experience and conception of health, often siloed in the biomedical approach; and in China, Wang found that people seek both traditional Chinese and western medicine on a pragmatic basis.

The head of physiotherapy had conducted research on the relationship between disability & poverty due to what he calls “the attachment to relatives in Uganda”, meaning the emphasis on family to provide care.


See for example this video from NBS news service about the Acholi woman, posted on 9th March 2019 and circulated on a women’s WhatsApp group on 12th June 2021:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tKv8I_Y_A8
This project has included a collaboration with a Ugandan digital health organisation, informing academic insights on ‘anthropological perspectives on mHealth’ (pending publication) and successful funding applications to launch a pilot project testing the feasibility / acceptability of a ‘community tele-psychotherapy centre’ in Kampala.

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