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The Violence of Peace:
Seeking Political Futures from Uganda's
Northern War

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The guns have fallen silent, and peace has returned to northern Uganda after two decades of brutal war against the LRA. The Acholi population has left the squalid camps where they were interned for years and returned to their land, and the long process of reconstruction and reconciliation has begun. Or so the official narrative proclaims—just as it had proclaimed the war to be a black-and-white struggle waged by the Ugandan government with their Western partners, seeking to rescue the civilian population from the terrorist LRA.

Today, instead of humanitarianism, peace is the sign under which policies are legitimated and interventions occur, from reconciliation, development, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reparations, to statebuilding, peacebuilding, protection, and transitional justice. They are being carried out by the Ugandan state, foreign states, and international bodies: whereas during the war there was a clear division of duties between the national and the international—the state focused on violence, while aid agencies provided rudimentary welfare and administration— now there is a significant convergence of national and international around common policies and interventions.

However, given the divorce of the war-time narrative from actual events in the north, it is perhaps not surprising that today's peace is rife with violence. Fighter jets roar overhead almost every day. The political protests in the wake of last year's elections were met with extreme force, as they were in other urban areas of Uganda. Strange diseases erupt among the rural population, for whom the state has disavowed almost all responsibility, as it had during the war. Land, the only thing left to most people, is being lost through often violent dispossession. Paramilitaries occupy rural schools, game wardens have killed farmers, and the military is staking out land for its own use. The main town in the region, Gulu, is seeing rapid urbanization into slums, increasing poverty, inequality, and crime. The UPDF is spread throughout the region in the name of hunting the remnants of the LRA. US military contractors fly reconnaissance missions, drones buzz overhead, and US marines operate openly in Kitgum. Rumors circulate of new rebel groups and there is widespread talk of another war.

How do we make sense of the fact that today's peace is shot through with violence? That is the puzzle I start with. My approach will be to argue that this peace-time violence is not to be seen as a remnant of the war or as a product of social breakdown caused by the war, which can be solved with the consolidation of peace and more extensive peacebuilding. Instead, I

argue that violence is a central element in the re-constitution of structures and relations of power in northern Uganda, a re-constitution that is occurring in the name of peace. Thus, violence and peace are not antithetical: the violence of peace is not residual, destructive, and non-political, but rather is productive political violence, pointing towards a specific future.

Modes of Power in Question

This leads to the first analytical question: how can we characterize the mode of power that is being established today in northern Uganda through violence, in the name of peace? A helpful place to begin is Mamdani's theorization of the form of state power in Africa, developed during the late colonial period and reinforced in the independence period.[1] Mamdani argued that bifurcated state power is organized around a central dichotomy between a rural, tribal form of community, under the rule of so-called custom, enforced by patriarchal authority backed up by the force of the state, and an urban, "modern," national form of community under civil law, the realm of citizenship and civil society. Both were founded on violent exclusion—the exclusion of natives from rights in any tribe but their own, enforced by the violence of the chief, and the exclusion of the native from civil society, enforced by state repression in urban areas. After independence, efforts at political reform typically reformed only one side of the dichotomy at a time, and did so at the cost of reinforcing the other. Reform failed to escape the logic of the dichotomy itself, and has thus been characterized broadly by a "back-and-forth movement between a decentralized and centralized despotism" (25-26).

Can the mode of power being established in northern Uganda today be interpreted as part of this "seesaw" movement whereby one or the other side is privileged? Is this dichotomy still central to the organization of power, or has it been superseded by other modes? It is hard to argue, *prima facie*, that power today is clearly being established through an entrenchment of the rural/customary at the cost of the urban/civil, or vice-versa. Rather, as I explain through examples below, it appears that both dimensions are being promoted by different policies and interventions, sometimes carried out by the same actors, with uncertain consequences.

Furthermore, there are trends that point to forms of power that appear to leave the rural/customary versus urban/civil dichotomy behind altogether. For one thing, the international has penetrated deeply into social life into northern Uganda and cannot help but have an impact on the structures of power. Can those structures still be understood to be centralized around a state logic, or do we have to see the structures of power as being partly determined by an autonomous logic of the international? There are also significant shifts in terms of the political economy of the north that need to be taken into account, that may be providing material bases for changing forms of power. Have recent developments—neoliberalism, international militarization, donor funding of state and civil society, massive intervention in the name of human rights—ended the dominant structuring of power around this dichotomy

1   Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject (Princeton, 1996).*

and around the state? Or is peace just the most recent form of reproducing the rural-urban divide around which state power is articulated?

The hypothesis I begin with is that we can best understand the logic of power today as one of depoliticization, effected through a convergence of technocratic administration and violence.[2] Administrative institutions without accountability arise, discourses are disseminated that place social life outside of the realm of political contestation, and the objective of politics is reduced to physical protection. This occurs ideologically—there is no alternative—or practically—by restricting politics to modes of action that cannot change anything fundamental, both coercively by repressing modes of radical political action, and consensually, by offering other routes that are supposed to lead to desired ends.

This gives rise to my second analytical question: in the midst of the violence of peace, what forms of re-politicization are emerging? As addressed in detail below, numerous political phenomena are appearing. In rural areas, politicization is particularly notable around struggles against land dispossession; in urban areas, unrest was seen after the 2011 elections. But there are also more subtle processes—women and youth contesting the claims made by older men to customary authority over land, new forms of rural-urban connections being forged, new claims being made against the state and international institutions, new political imaginaries being discussed, new forms of association arising.

So my second inquiry will be into this new political field. Of whom are claims are being made, and in whose name? What types of association are emerging around those claims, and can we see new political subjects arising through collective action? More specifically, we need to look at the terrains on which political negotiations are taking place—on what grounds are people making claims of and negotiating with the state? Or, even more broadly, with whom and on what grounds are people making claims and negotiating in the first place—the state, NGOs, international agencies, foreign militaries? Does a distinction arise between, on the one hand, claims and associations that use the categories based on the legitimacy of particular communities, and, on the other, those that operate upon the terrain of the categories of the modern state? Or are new kinds of claims being made, based upon other identities? Are there new rural politics, urban politics, or rural-urban politics? Or do we see entirely new forms of politics, not structured around the rural-urban divide? Can concepts such as civil society, citizenship, community, modernity, custom, or democracy be productively employed, either in practice or in theory?

Problems of Political Concepts

The question of emerging forms of politics is difficult because, to grasp their meaning, we need to take a historical-critical approach to the very concepts that we use to understand those forms. This general difficulty of interpretation is intensified because these are mostly

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2   See Appendix 2 for a longer consideration of the question of depoliticization.

political concepts born of critical reflection from within the Western experience, but that, when they travel to Africa, tend to leave their critical edge behind and find themselves deployed as normative models for a deviant Africa to aspire to. The fact that these concepts have been tied up historically with violence in Africa—the violence of their imposition under colonial rule and the violence required to enforce their exclusions—makes their productive use even more difficult. So, to use these categories as if they operated in the same way here as they do in the West is to occlude the violence that constitutes them and that may constitute the politics that follow from that act of interpretation.

The analyst is thus faced with the problem of using political concepts with which to think, while needing to retain cognizance of those concepts' historical particularity. One approach to solve this problem is to consider politics as occurring entirely within existing frameworks of power, so that concepts have no meaning outside the particular meaning established locally in those political frameworks. In this approach, political acts can only be understood locally, within the immediate conceptual world of the actors, and concepts that may have had a life elsewhere are only allowed the meaning established within the local world's horizons. However, this approach leaves little room for creative work with concepts on the part of those deploying them, either in practice or in theory. It condemns most politics to take place within existing concepts and structures of power, and to unintentionally reproduce the dominant mode in which those concepts have been actualized.

My approach is to take these concepts' histories of violence, histories that can find themselves unintentionally reproduced by political action or political interpretation, as representing only the *dominant* histories of these concepts. Even if a concept is deployed in a fashion that enables violence and domination now—for example, sovereignty in the R2P discourse, or custom in a patriarchal discourse, or modernity in a Eurocentric discourse, or civil society in a racist or classist discourse—other histories of these concepts often exist as well. These alternative histories can perhaps provide the context in which new political events can be interpreted, so that these events are not understood to simply reproduce the structures of power of the past by using concepts employed in those structures. Furthermore, as *political* concepts, they will always contain a moment or a possibility of contingency, the very foundation of politics. Therefore, these concepts will also contain the possibility of providing bases from which to go beyond their particular histories, the particular ways they have been deployed in practice, and be used to make new claims, to legitimate new associations, or to ground new actions or events. There is always the opportunity to create previously unimagined political possibilities out of what exists. Therefore, my approach would be to place political concepts within their historical contexts, but not to see the particular, dominant history in which those concepts have been articulated as delimiting the horizons in which those concepts can be deployed

theoretically or practically—with the caveat that any attempt to go beyond that dominant history must explicitly and critically locate its own historical-discursive foundation.[3]

This represents an attempt to navigate between what I see as two undesirable options. On the one hand is the notion that all politics and all theorization is local, and so any political concept can only have the meaning established within that immediate local context. This undoes the possibility for theorization beyond the local, and also does away with the possibility for political practice beyond the local. On the other hand is the notion that political concepts are universal—an idea that, given the concepts' Western origins, amounts to a declaration of the unique universality of the West and an affirmation that, whether in theory or practice, the universalization of events can only take place by having them draw upon the universal dimension of Western history, as the West remains the universal and the non-West is denied meaningful history.

I do not think that the rejection of the Western-centric universality of concepts necessitates a reversion to the entirely local. Instead, I would draw a distinction between the universal, which declares itself to be necessary, and the universalizable, or perhaps the generalizable, which is contingent, simply the recognition that concepts have the possibility to gain relevance, or find resonance, in the future outside of where they are deployed in the present. To do so requires looking to those concepts' uses within what we might call regional histories, between the universal and the local, generalizable but contingent, histories of debate, practice, argument, and force. Seeing concepts as informed by regional histories allows them the possibility to find application elsewhere without claiming for them universality. Thus, I hope political theory can draw upon non- Western regional histories in which new events can be interpreted and then later re- interpreted.

The search for histories to understand today's political events in northern Uganda makes clear that the search for history can also help those events to point the way towards futures of peace. This is because episodes of politicization in northern Uganda are at root efforts to overcome the legacy of the war, efforts to find peace on people's own terms, terms that involve the demand for justice. Thus, the struggle between the violent depoliticization and politicization is a struggle over the future, alternative futures of peace that draw upon different histories for their legitimacy and strength.

I see this as a project in political theory, but one based upon a particular understanding of how political theory should take place. It tries to remain faithful to the generality of political concepts, which is necessary if theorization or inclusive politicization is to be possible, while informing its understanding of those concepts through specific regional histories. It is an effort in political theory building that starts from the problem of what histories it founds

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3   This begs the question of what politics or the political itself is. We can map out the controversies on this question in the West—between Schmitt and Arendt, Badiou and Ranciere, Habermas and Agamben—but for the purposes of this project, I think I will have to pay attention to the "problem spaces" in which answers to the question of what politics is have been offered.

itself upon, what traditions it frames itself within, that tries to keep open the question of what politics itself is throughout the process of theorization.

Positioning the Questions

The project is situated between two broad bodies of literature. First are studies of the modes of power in African states. The limitations of this literature—in particular the Africanist literature in the West—have been documented: its tendency to decontextualize certain phenomena—such as corruption, patronage relations, the spectacle, or violence— and then absolutize those as representing the essential nature of the deviant African state. The main drawback of this literature for my study is that even the more historically grounded and theoretically rich examples pay little attention to the consequences of globalized "liberal" discourses and regimes—such as "peace"—and contemporary forms of Western liberal intervention for the structure of power in African states. The main exception to this is the significant literature that focuses on the state and the impact of structural adjustment and donor funding, and a more limited literature on donors, NGOs, and civil society. However, works that explore the broad range of those discourses and forms of intervention are rare.

The second body of literature are studies of the politics of global liberal discourses, regimes, and forms of intervention. While this literature's strength is that it takes a theoretically rigorous approach to the broad set of interventionist liberal discourses and regimes, its limitation is that it does not adequately take into account the specificity of the political structures in those places where such interventions occur. Instead, it prefers considering the consequences of intervention as being inscribed upon generalized, non- specific subjects, communities, or states.

Critical development studies is the one field in which theoretical rigor has been brought together with an attention to the specific political structures into which intervention occurs. There is also a cluster of works around the South African TRC, focusing on the structure of state power and the impact of the human rights discourse. Although I tried to occupy this space in my first book, I do not think I managed to do so, and, although it had both dimensions, did not connect them. In *Displacing Human Rights*, I argued that state power was reduced to the security services, while all other tasks of administration were taken over by aid agencies. The camp was the particular technological-social form that enabled this cooperation between state violence and NGO discipline in the administration of populations that were dying in huge numbers from a humanitarian crisis that was a consequence of intentional government counterinsurgency policy. However, I feel that I took too extreme a view of this particular form of power and the radical nature of its break from what had gone before. Of course, the camps were in many ways exceptional—perhaps the closest in northern Ugandan history were the forced displacements carried out by the British to deal with sleeping sickness in the mid-1910s, but that in no way matched the total nature of the humanitarian administration

of the population, nor the level of state violence faced by the displaced. Therefore, I focused too much on violence and humanitarian administration, and since it was there that I looked for the form of power, it was also in the conditions created by those that I looked for politics among the administered targets of violence.

So perhaps one step of my project will be to explore the usefulness of placing the form of power used upon the population during the war in historical context by focusing on concepts such as such as counterinsurgency, forced population movement, or the totalizing forms of administration that were found in the camps. The task would be to de- exceptionalize that violence and international administration, and see those as setting the stage for the forms of power being developed in the post-war period.

PRELIMINARY AND UNEVEN EXAMPLES

This section briefly looks at a few areas in which I propose to explore the way power is being structured today. I will surely narrow them down or expand them as the study progresses.

Rural Peacebuilding: Between the Customary and the Modern?

As explained above, we can see both the customary and the modern featuring in a number of policies and interventions by the state and foreign forces. The customary can be found in the continuing ethnicization of national politics; in the fact that the government and NGOs have built an entire hierarchy of so-called traditional chiefs in Acholi who are seeking control over land; in the regime of customary power that is being fostered throughout Acholi society through so-called traditional justice and reconciliation interventions; and in the state's push for the formalization of customary land tenure through "certificates of customary ownership." But modernization and development are also promoted: women and youth who are dissatisfied with patriarchal power in the countryside are being targeted by state and international developmental interventions; efforts have been made to force a shift from customary land tenure to freehold; and several highly-publicized attempts have been made by the state to grab land for commercial farming in the name of development. There is an expansion and intensification of the state's administrative and coercive power for decentralization and good governance through increased numbers of districts. The internal security apparatus has been extended and localized, and the NRM has penetrated further into Acholi society as people have moved home from the camps. In northern Uganda's one urban area, Gulu (Uganda's second-largest town), a broad set of associations that go under the name "civil society"—primarily sponsored by foreign donors—and a vocal political opposition co-exist with the exclusion of the vast majority of urban residents from membership in that civil society or a modern economy.

The tension between the two can be found in peacebuilding policies. One strand of peacebuilding situates itself firmly within the modernity discourse and is promoted by state and NGOs. This strand posits a specific sequence of phases: from humanitarian relief to early recovery to reconstruction and development. In this conception, northern Uganda's problem is therefore one of "catching up": war set back development in Acholi, and now, through reconstruction and intensified development interventions, northern Uganda can catch up with the rest of the country. This is the conception found in the government's 2007 Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda, but also in district development plans and the NGO literature. The opinion that the Acholi are culturally unsuited for development is also often heard—either temporarily, because of the "dependency" that has been spread as a result of the camps, the reliance on hand-outs, and the breakdown of Acholi society, or

inherently, because of traditional attitudes among the Acholi that prevent them from being disposed to wage work. To help the Acholi "catch up," then, all the usual suspects have been brought out: access to improved seeds and other "inputs," promotion of "Income Generating Activities," access to microcredit loans, attempts to establish new marketing facilities, and so on. Ambitious urban development plans for Gulu town are in the works, and some of the former camps are slated for urbanization.

Another strand of peacebuilding discourse, however, focuses on the customary, and is oriented not toward development, but toward reconciliation. The logic informing traditional reconciliation and justice interventions is familiar from the broader field of peacebuilding: violence is seen as emerging from the breakdown of war-affected societies, the etiology of which is located in the collapse of traditional values and social harmony, the disappearance of ritual practices that ensured such harmony, and the loss of authority among elders and other traditional leaders. Thus, the breakdown of war-affected society, where that society is defined as traditional, is cause and consequence of violence. Traditional reconciliation and justice interventions are to help rebuild this lost authority structure so that it can preside over reconstructed traditional societies, as Africans are to be "empowered" as tribes, under customary chiefs. I have termed this the *ethnojustice* agenda, in which the fulfillment of justice is equated with the establishment of what is termed a traditional social order.[4]

The turn to custom on the part of the West represents a radicalized attempt to institute participation in peacebuilding as a way of improving the legitimacy and efficacy of intervention, based on the idea that in Africa authentic identities are cultural identities, and so participation should take place within a cultural framework or risk being rejected. But the invocation of culture and tradition in the service of reconciliation also reflects a deeper distrust among interveners of Africans' preparation for modernity, and represents an effort by interveners to transcend the problems they understand to arise from the attempt to impose liberal Western models on supposedly "illiberal" places. It declares that violence in Africa is most fundamentally derived from the disruption caused by the clash between a timeless, still-present, and ineradicable African tradition and an imposed Western modernity. In short, like the instrumental identification and use of African tradition during the colonial period, based upon the idea that too-fast a transition to modernity would introduce destructive upheaval into African societies, today the idea of an eternal African tradition is again imagined and deployed instrumentally for the sake of promoting peace and reconciliation.

The controversy over land tenure reform shows the split between these two. There is a dominant narrative of land conflict in Acholi today,[5] which presents land management before the war as internal to the Acholi community, under customary norms guided by legitimate elders and clan leaders. Following the general logic of the peacebuilding discourse, this

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4   Branch 2011, chapter 6.
5   For one of the few non-policy-oriented works, see Sebina-Zziwa, A., Nabacwa, M., Mwebaza, R., Bogere, G. and Achiro, R., *Emerging Land Related Issues in the Acholi Sub-Region: Northern Uganda* (Kampala: Makerere Institute of Social Research, 2008).

narrative states that conflict is proceeding from internal social breakdown, and so what is needed to end conflict and "build peace" is intervention by the state or by international agencies to rebuild social order. The controversy comes in over the two approaches to this "re"-building of social order. The first is to develop a statutory legal regime based on a shift to formally titled freehold land. In this view, land conflict caused by the breakdown in customary land management is a major hurdle to development in Acholi, and so land management systems need to be rebuilt in a development-friendly fashion. The second focuses on the Acholi as a tribe, and argues that, for reconciliation and sustainable internal peace to occur, what is needed is to formalize customary norms and place them under the enforcement of (externally-supported) "traditional" elders and lineage-based authorities.

What is common to both projects is the idea that, for peace to be ensured (whether understood as development or reconciliation), a transformative intervention is needed either to replace custom with a supposedly rationalized, state-based system of land management, or to formalize custom into a set of regular rules and recognized authorities, which will guarantee both peace and justice, in terms of equitable and fair access to and ownership of land. Furthermore, both assume that intervention is to be premised upon establishing the truth (who the proper owner is of land and what the boundaries are, to be realized through scientific techniques) and empowering experts to enforce rules based on that truth, whether state authorities to guard the market or customary authorities to guard the customary.[6] Thus, expert knowledge is needed to ascertain the truth and then to enforce rules based upon that truth—a techno-administrative approach.

These apparently contradictory peacebuilding policies are fostering certain forms of rural power, as new configurations of dominant forces are appearing. Developmental interventions are entrenching the power of those with political connections or access to resources needed to acquire large parcels of land or introduce commercialized production. Customary interventions are helping male elders re-assert their claims to customary authority over land and people. But there is overlap: as male elders establish power, they use that power to sell off land to political elites, while the marketization of land also leads to the accrual of benefits to those posing as chiefs. A result is depoliticization, as land access and use are taken out of the arena of political contestation and made subject to the market or the decisions of older men, enforced by the state.

The losers under these regimes are also generally the same: poor youth and women who have few resources or those who have fractured family or kin relations, a widespread issue in post-war Acholi. Those who are losing out in the struggle over land are becoming a new landless and, in the absence or rural employment, moving to towns and former camps, as addressed below. Dispossession is leading to political action: from women farmers refusing the let the Madhvani motorcade enter their land, to people in Pabbo tearing up the boundary markers put down by the UPDF, to skirmishes in Apaa with UWA game wardens. How can we make sense

6   See Timothy Mitchell, Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity (California, 2002).

of these forms of politics? Are they taking place in the name of defending custom, or are they legitimated in other ways? Clearly, the dominant narrative of land conflict in Acholi needs to be rethought: it cannot be framed as internal conflict resulting from social breakdown, but instead we need to ask how the supposed solutions may themselves be creating the "conflict," place those solutions themselves in national and international political contexts.

Urban Transformations

The fact that forced urbanization is continuing on a smaller scale in the post-war period as multiple processes of land dispossession are sending a new population of landless to seek refuge in towns, makes clear that today's forms of power cannot be understood by treating the rural in isolation, and requires investigation into the urban as well. In Gulu, the consequences of this rural crisis and systematic land dispossession are already being seen. The town's population is increasing despite the end of the war, while employment opportunities are minimal due to the departure of the humanitarian industry. The lack of employment and swelling population have led to increasing poverty, which has occurred in tandem with the expansion of slums. In the midst of this increasing deprivation, there has been a new influx of money into Gulu as various elites take advantage of the peace to buy land, leading to gentrification and the dispossession of the many coupled with the concentration of wealth in a few. The convergence of politically-connected elites, a donor-dependent civil society, and the new landless in a place where the state is driving "development" to the benefit of the first two and the detriment of the third, resembles neoliberal urbanization. In the countryside, the loss of cattle and the war's destruction of people's economic resources, in the context of the population's abandonment by the state, poses a threat to survival, which has become a central political concern in both rural and urban areas.

The first question is how to understand this new form of slum-based urbanization in the north, putting it in the context of the legacy of colonial forms of urban power and in the context of a demographic shift of dispossessed, unemployed youth to rapidly expanding slums. These youth are represented as a security threat in need of increased surveillance and control, and so discourses around youth criminality in Gulu intensify as the state resuscitates colonial-era laws designed to prevent political organization or mobilization. How do we make sense of this type of urban power? Can it be seen as an exclusion from civil society, or is it something else?

It is important to note that urbanization is not an entirely forced process. In addition to the new landless, some youth and women have chosen to remain in town in order to try to maintain the lives they developed there during displacement. Modern development, including commercialization of farming or commodification of land, can offer youth and women a possible escape from rural patriarchy and a foot in the kind of world that many of them grew up with during displacement, a world of mobility and modernity. However, the lack of

employment in town makes urban life an extremely difficult option for those who choose it. All but the most lucky, therefore, find themselves excluded—often violently—from both the rural community of the customary and the urban community of the modern.

However, in the face of this exclusion, new politics are emerging. There is a rich associational life that developed among women and youth during displacement, primarily around economic and cultural activities, that continues to provide the ground for contesting patriarchal power in the countryside and trying to build livelihoods in town. Women and youth are also forging new modes of mobility between the rural and urban, new forms of living that bridge the two. Are they coming up with ways of going beyond the divide, staking complementary claims in each? Do these groups represent a struggle within the field of custom through the assertion of alternative concepts of tradition, or will they go outside custom to the realm of the modern to make their claims? Or are they drawing on entirely different fields beyond the customary-modern dichotomy?

To make it even more complicated, these groups were targeted by the NRM during the 2011 elections to mobilize votes—but today, as the promises of assistance have not been fulfilled, these same groups may be turning against the government. In urban areas, there were brief, but violent, protests after the 2011 elections—what did these elections represent? A rejection of the election results, of the NRM, of poverty and unemployment? Or a rejection of elections, of liberal national and international governance itself as it has been embodied in northern Uganda?

Are these forms of political action able to reject the demand that they choose between the customary under patriarchal power or the modern under the power of the market? Can alternative histories be found of these notions of community that reject the exclusion and domination built into their prevalent forms today? Are there alternative histories of civil society that can be used to understand the new forms of association in urban areas? Or do we need other concepts, such as "political society," to grasp the political possibilities opened up by the urban transformations? Can the customary be subject to redefinition, opened to make way for inclusion and mobility through a historicization of today's patriarchal, immobile notion of custom? Could the history of migration and forced displacement within what is now Acholiland open the customary to determination by contingent communities, themselves open to redefinition and renegotiation? Customary land tenure can allow land access to be determined by politics within the community, so the primary focus is not on the various formalized systems of land tenure, but on political struggle within the community.

Justice: The Individual or Community as Victim?

What has become of justice with today's peace? The transitional justice industry landed in Uganda during the war, in large part drawn by the ICC's intervention. Since the end of the war, questions around trials and criminal justice have become more and more remote, only

briefly re-invigorated when an LRA commander is captured or in the debates over the reform to the Amnesty Law. Instead, transitional justice has moved onto issues around reparations and reconciliation in the name of undoing the underlying political problems that gave rise to the war. To this end, reparations are being provided by the state and also, notably, by the ICC.

Reparations adhere to both notions of community, as individual human rights holders and ethnic groups are defined as victims. I want to ask, what are the claims to which the state is responding, and what are the consequences of their response? What associations are being assembled around claims to reparation from the state or ICC? What happens as certain forms of violence, many of which are still visible on people's bodies, are selected as establishing victimhood and thus a claim to reparations? What happens within the community, between the community and the state, between the people and an imaginary "international community," and between that community and other communities? Is a further ethnic particularization of claims taking place around narratives of victimhood constructed against other communities, or is there the possibility for the emergence of broader communities of survivors?

The fact that reparations are being provided by the state and by the ICC provides the possibility for an illuminating comparison. The ICC's Trust Fund for Victims has moved into Uganda, and with the centrality of the TFV, Uganda is, once again, a cutting edge for experimentation with new technologies. In this way, "international justice" has become limited to minor reparations given out by the ICC to those deemed to be proper victims. Through opaque procedures, the experience of certain forms of physical violence is deemed worthy of reparation by the ICC, while the TFV is marketed as the ICC's saving grace, enabling it to face down critics with the declaration that it is helping victims.

Reparations are one aspect of broader processes going under the name of reconciliation. Reconciliation is to take place on a number of different levels: within Acholi society, between the Acholi and the government, and between different communities in the north, in particular with the Langi and Iteso. Reconciliation is prominent in the state's PRDP, as two of its four objectives concern it, specifically through rebuilding and empowering communities and through peace building and reconciliation. Thus, reconciliation is being framed in communal terms, as the need to reconcile the Acholi with the state and with other ethnic communities, and on individual terms, as the need to reconcile former LRA with their communities. What are the current renegotiations of Acholi identity occurring through the various initiatives at political reconciliation? Is it a terrain upon which political struggles take place, or is it being superseded through other forms of identity?

Protection and the Politics of Survival

Survival continues to be an organizing value of politics in northern Uganda, even today with the end of the war. Survival as politics appears to go beyond the customary-modern

dichotomy and provide a different ground upon which depoliticization and repoliticization take place. I will look at two sites where I hope to discern these developments: first, the issue of so-called nodding disease; and second, the politics around protection, in particular the Responsibility to Protect doctrine as it has been deployed here.

The cluster of symptoms that has been labeled nodding disease can perhaps best be understood as the physical legacy of the war, in particular the camps, on the body, and as a product of those bodies having been declared disposable by the state and economy in the aftermath of the war. Nodding disease, and the conditions that made it possible, raise questions about the nature of contemporary state power, for which concepts such as biopolitics might be useful. Nodding disease is also making possible new political claims on the state and on international institutions, raising questions of how the body and sickness mediate people's relation with the state and with global political and economic processes. What are people claiming of the state in the context of the neoliberal state's withdrawal from a commitment to its citizenry's social welfare or physical survival? Is nodding disease providing a focal point, a name, for people to use in demanding that they be allowed to live, in ways that they were unable to before? Can we see the emergence of forms of what have been called biological citizenship? What kinds of associations or subjects may be arising out of the transformation of the preservation of life into a political value? Are these demands being narrowed to nodding disease because it has a name, or can this particular naming spark a broader re-politicization and lead to expanded claims on the state?

The politics of survival are taking on a very different form through the discourse of protection, formalized under the so-called Responsibility to Protect. In the name of protection, militarized security networks are being formed throughout Africa, in large part integrated under AFRICOM, that bring together state, sub-state, and international levels. Uganda is being incorporated in a number of ways, such as by leading the regional hunt for the LRA, in the AMISOM forces in Somalia, and through cooperation in joint- training exercises. AFRICOM has established a number of beachheads in Uganda, US security contractors fly reconnaissance missions, as the Ugandan state uses American support to militarize. Before seeing these new developments as exceptional, they need to be placed in the history of militarization in Uganda to focus on the persistence of counterinsurgency.

More broadly, militarized protection needs to be seen in a history—in histories—of sovereignty. Protection today has a two-sided approach to African sovereignty: it claims to uphold African sovereignty when that sovereignty is responsibly exercised for the sake of protection; but it declares African sovereignty void when the state is deemed to have failed in that role. The first side is at work in anti-LRA protection. The direct involvement of 100 US "military advisers," for instance, has been presented as an effort to build regional states' military capacity so that they can exercise responsible sovereignty through protection. As President Obama explains, the deployment is to "provide information, advice, and assistance to select partner nation forces" in order to "enhance regional efforts." The second side can

be seen when dealing with "irresponsible" states—such as Libya—for whom sovereignty is reduced to the legitimacy that accrues to the institution with effective protection capacity, and so must be forfeited by the African state to allow legitimate Western invasion to occur.

This externalization of the responsibility for judging state legitimacy presumes the failure of democratic political agency. The so-called international community is to decide when a state is abusing its people to the point where they can no longer act politically for themselves; until that point, it is also up to the international community to deem a state responsible and deserving of support. The people are required to be satisfied with and silent in the face of the international community's judgment of their relation with their own state.

Protection is a conservative vision of politics, declaring that existing states and political bodies be stabilized and reoriented as administrative institutions incorporated into a global protection network. Protection becomes the end of politics, and the distinction between normal politics within states and exceptional interventions to save human life is refused—instead, normal politics is itself about protecting life, and there are no political values beyond it. Those espousing political agendas find themselves termed "extremists" or terrorists, and dealt with coercively. It is not only anti-democratic, but also anti- political. Depoliticization is the consequence, as people are faced with the choice of accepting or rejecting militarization. These choices are interpreted according to the dominant dichotomy of sovereignty versus human rights, so that those who accept militarization are deemed in support of human rights, while those against militarization are condemned as being anti-rights.

These modes of political action—consent or resistance to intervention—cannot be allowed to be interpreted through the sovereignty-versus-rights dichotomy, through the conceptual framework that has been naturalized in the 21st century and the spurious history of sovereignty it depends upon. Today's dominant history is not the only history of sovereignty, and thus the sovereignty-versus-rights dichotomy is not the only conceptual framework in which politics can be interpreted. There are other histories of international order based upon sovereignty—anti-colonial sovereignty, internationalist sovereignty—that can perhaps provide the framework in which today's political phenomena can be made sense of. There are also histories of international order or regional orders that are not oriented around sovereignty, that might provide legitimacy to other interpretations of today's political events. We should ask, what are the possibilities within sovereignty or possibilities beyond sovereignty that can be activated today to point to futures of peace? And can broader political implications be seen in the new political subjects arising today, are they making claims of universality?

The disjuncture between the real, concrete threats to human life—such as the malnutrition and abandonment that underlie nodding disease—and the regime of militarization that expands in the name of protecting life, makes clear the irony of today's protection discourse. It reveals the desire to obscure the true threats to human life and to displace the problem onto another realm—from capitalism and imperialism onto ethnically-motivated atrocity.

To then propose the solution of protecting life through reactionary militarization furthers the irony, because a global politics of life, a collective demand that the structures of power be transformed so as to allow humanity to survive, today would be a revolutionary politics. But instead, protection displaces the threat to human existence onto African states and warlords, and the call to protect life becomes a parody.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Research Project Proposal as Social Form

The research project proposal is not a natural, self-evident step in the process of intellectual labor. It is a specific technology, with a history and a social and political content. The research project proposal is, at heart, a supplication for money, one that is to be made to donors—but donors who won't just give their money anyhow. Donors believe that Africa's problem is corruption, nepotism, traditionalism and irrationalism, which is euphemized as a lack of capacity and of professionalism. They insist that, in order to access money, those wishing to do research, start a community water project, launch a political party, or undertake any form of social or political action, must write a proposal and thus discipline their social, political, or intellectual project within particular categories: background, statement of problem, methodology, outputs, evaluation, accountability for funds, policy relevance, and so on. Thus, the project proposal is not only a plea for funds, but also an appeal for approval. This process, according to its ideology, builds capacity, professionalizes, and helps guarantee that the donors "get results" for their "investment" by establishing a concrete "objective" that the project will meet and "benchmarks" it will be measured against.

The social form of this project proposal technology and that form's politics require critical assessment. As this technology is disseminated throughout society via endless workshops, sensitizations and trainings put on by NGOs and aid agencies under the names of development, microcredit, community peacebuilding, children's rights, or whatever, it ends up so naturalized that even where the conditions for its realization are not present—there is no donor to be seen anywhere—social and political action can come automatically to be forced into project categories and language.

Through the project proposal, scholarship adopts a specific social form: it is a model of professionalization, expertization, in which the intellectual is to manage the research of others—"research assistants"—and is then to ensure the delivery of results to a client, against which he or she will be held accountable for the donor funds used. The intellectual is to be constructed as a rationalized elite, and rewarded with more funds if donor standards are met. Like any technology, it can of course be repurposed, but we have to ask to what extent its form determines its politics, even when its content is changed. Maybe we can call this a neo-colonial mode of intellectual labor.

In this proposal, I try to avoid the neo-colonial form of the project proposal. But escape is not easy: instead, I see myself adhering to what might be called a bourgeois form of the project proposal and intellectual labor—well, from its perspective, it is not even labor. The bourgeois

form generally is one in which the individual arrogates to him or herself the work of others and attributes it to his or her own unique, virtuoso talent. Whether the individual's talent is said to be for business, or for thinking and writing, the bourgeois form is the same: the individual attributing to his or her own genius what is in fact a social product, a social product that is extracted from others through unrecognized structures of inequality and violence. By rejecting the research assistance model and its explicit exploitation of others' labor, the bourgeois form only occludes its own even more necessary dependence upon the intellectual work of others, in particular the intellectual work of "subjects" who are interviewed, others who have written on the topic (and their "subjects"), interlocutors in conversations,[7] and so on all the way up to what has been called the general intellect. The bourgeois form indignantly refuses the professionalization of the neo-colonial form—"how can my genius be reduced to deliverable project outcomes?!"—but only to replace it with a more mystified politics and a more fetishized object, the work as intimate personal expression. Again, while this model can be repurposed, we have to ask how much the form determines its politics even if its explicit content claims a radical political intent.

Both of these forms—and others—need to be exposed and challenged, I believe, even if they are strategically or ironically adhered to in certain situations. I do not think that either the neo-colonial nor the bourgeois mode of research—one explicitly dependent on foreign donors and a neo-colonial political economy, the other, without admitting it, upon the exploitation of others and their intellectual labor—is viable here and now. Fortunately, there is no shortage of experiments beyond these modes of intellectual work, so I would encourage students to take a critical perspective on the social form of their own modes of intellectual work, and think about the possibility of coming up with alternatives that may be based on explicitly collective values and practices, alternatives that thematize their own politics of form.

Appendix 2: Depoliticization and re-politicization

A few weeks ago, Wang Hui compellingly presented the argument that, in many regions of the world, the 21st century has been characterized by widespread and multiple processes of depoliticization. He framed depoliticization as proceeding in the West and in China in a "mutually implicated" fashion,[8] an insight that resonates with the prevalent feeling of political paralysis on the Western left today, which has left the left in a desperate search for new politics and political subjects. In the West and, apparently to some extent in China as well, this search for the re-emergence of the political in the face of depoliticization is a response to a perception of multiple crises: the crisis of revolution, of the party, of representative democracy, of modernity, of the post-colonial state, of the nation, of internationalism, of class, or of the left itself. Following Wang, thus, depoliticization has not been a uniform,

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7   I'll admit, some of these ideas came up in a conversation with Antonio Tomas and Mahmood Mamdani— but I doubt either would want be held responsible for what I say here!
8   Wang Hui, "Depoliticized Politics, multiple components of hegemony, and the eclipse of the Sixties," Inter-Asia Cultural Studies vol. 7, no. 4 (2006): 683-700.

homogenizing process. Instead, it has proceeded through different routes and on different time-frames and it is both the differences, and the possible "mutual implications," that require investigation.

I am attracted by Wang's argument because of its resonance with the argument I tried to make on a smaller scale and in a specific case in *Displacing Human Rights*. My book was in large part about the depoliticizing logics of human rights intervention. It focused on the complementary character of violence and discipline in de-politicizing people who were stuck in camps in the middle of a war, how these logics brought together the Ugandan state with intervening foreign agencies, all of whom, in pursuit of their own interests, converged on this mixture of violence and discipline. By placing the possibilities of political organization in the context of the history of the construction and renegotiation of ethnic political identity, I argued that this depoliticization prevented the emergence of political organization among the people that could have provided the basis for a movement for peace. However, in considering the possibilities of repoliticization, I believe that I hewed too closely to a basic model of resistance—I looked for politics in the resistance to, refusal, reconfiguration, or instrumentalization of specific forms of intervention. The forms of politics I was seeking were restricted, mapped too closely to the forms of power that had been my primary focus. Therefore, while I begin in this project by adhering to the idea of depoliticization, I seek to ground it and repoliticization more in the structures of power in the site of intervention.

I start with the notion that depoliticization can be a productive concept for interpreting aspects of 21st century politics in Uganda and perhaps elsewhere in Africa, as we see a period of mutually-implicated, uneven and locally determined, processes of depoliticization. I would put the century's starting point in the 1980s, with the era of structural adjustment brought on by the so-called debt crisis. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent US War on Terror have not fundamentally changed what began in the 1980s, but only further accentuated its tendencies.

Just as politicization legitimates itself through certain political values, so has de- politicization been legitimated through certain de-politicizing values, borne by de- politicized subjects that undermine the possibility of political subjectivity, let alone collective political subjectivity. The political subjects of the past—class, nation, or people—are undone. Two de-politicized value-subject pairs have been central, I believe.

First, there is the subject "homo economicus," premised upon the economic value of profit through the market. Humanity is deemed to be split up into atomistic individuals, rational profit maximizers. There is no politics, only the market, and it takes a particularly honest neoliberal to recognize the central role of state violence in reproducing the market through enforcing contracts and upholding property rights. Second, there is the human rights holder, premised upon the moral value of individual human autonomy and dignity. People are individuals with certain sets of rights to personal autonomy, primarily based around individual physical

integrity, but also certain forms of freedom, to be enforced through a juridical model. Agency is in the hands of the state as enforcer of those rights. Even in its most political articulation, the human rights holder reduces the human being to a voter—an individualized, private, and secret subject.

These consensual modes of depoliticization are paired with coercion. Violence to enforce the market, violence against those said to be abusing human rights, violence against terrorists and extremists, violence to protect people from themselves or others. This is the complement, embodied today in broad processes of militarization domestically and internationally. The social forms through which depoliticization has spread in the 21st century can be found in neoliberal capitalism, NGOs, donor-recipient relations at all levels, development, the ICC, humanitarianism, the War on Terror, and the research project proposal. The state is both depoliticized and becomes an agent of depoliticization.

This raises my first question: what paths of depoliticization are occurring today under the sign of peace? What are the different configurations of national and foreign forces that are undergirding these processes, what are the roles of economic, cultural, and political modes of depoliticization, and what is the relation between violence and the construction of consent? These processes will be put in historical perspective—what are the particular histories of these forms of depoliticization? What ideas or values have they been bound up with in the past, what has made them possible today? Thus, the project will be a series of histories of particular depoliticizing processes—but these will also be histories of the possibility of repoliticization.

That raises the second question: if it is accurate to see a trend of hegemonic depoliticization, then what kinds of politics are emerging today from this matrix? As mentioned, this question has given rise to a desperate search for new forms of politics, new political subjectivities: some search for a new universal political subject—Alain Badiou, for example, recently declared Tahrir square to be the "rebirth of History"[9]— while others celebrate the multiple, incommensurable "insurrections of little selves,"[10] and still others attempt to find provisional forms of unity in multiplicity—the popularity of the concept "multitude" is testament to this attempt, and its critical reception testament to its difficulties.[11] But what form that repoliticization will take is not yet known. It will be based on the conditions existing, use what is at hand, but will emerge through an unpredictable, unexpected reconfiguration, a reconstellation. But, as argued above, its meaning will have to be sought within historicized political concepts.

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9   Alain Badiou, The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings (London: Verso, 2012).
10   This is Aditya Nigham's invocation of Foucault – not that he falls into this celebratory category himself (The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular-Nationalism in India [New Delhi: Oxford, 2006]).
11   See the works of Hardt and Negri, also Paolo Virlo.

Appendix 3: Methodology

How do you write a research project proposal about something that you're not sure exists, and that, even if it does exist, you don't know what words, what categories and concepts, to use to describe it? Even harder, how do you write a literature review of this unknown object? A literature review assumes that an object at least exists, when what needs investigating is precisely how something comes to be represented and written about as an object of study in the first place.

I have nothing to say about methodology, which is the critical study of systems for acquiring knowledge. Even the word "method" implies a regularity and rigid structure which might be appropriate to the discovery of new particles, but that I cannot see my work as having.[12] I agree with Bruno Latour that invocations of the "pompous Greek name of 'method,' or, even worse, 'methodology'" only allow us to distract attention from what we're really, actually doing.[13] So it might be better for me to try to respond to the question, what will I be doing and how will I do it? And to that I don't have much of an answer beyond talking to people and reading texts from the past and present. To technicize this further is a problem, not a solution, because as with all technicizations it obscures the actual social context into which such a "method" will be deployed and the "researcher" will intervene, and the social relations of which that intervention will be a part.

A more relevant question is thus not about the abstracted "method" of research—take two parts FGDs, three parts KIIs, combine with one part random survey, and stir—but about the place of the so-called researcher in the social context where the research is taking place. In my case: northern Uganda has gone from seeing about one Western researcher per year to seeing hordes of them, primarily masters' students, carrying out FGDs, KIIs, and surveys, mostly operating within the anti-democratic, interventionist discourse of "determining local perceptions." There is widespread resentment towards such "research," and the small bribes offered to participate in surveys or interviews no longer compensate for the indignity and waste of time and energy they involve. So, we have to ask, does Acholi really need another researcher, more research? Given that the answer is "no," a deeper rethinking of what research is needs to be carried out—starting perhaps by rejecting the figure of the researcher and replacing it with a social being whose relations with others are not mediated through the techniques of research and whose productive act is writing.

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12 The etymology of the word doesn't give much reason to use it: method is derived from the Latin methodus, from Greek methodos, which literally means a going after, from meta- after and hodos way. Methodology, according to the OED, was first used in 1800.
13 Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social (New York: Oxford, 2005), p. 17.

Appendix 4: Policy Relevance

My hope is that what I write leaves its readers unsettled. At this point, I do not seek policy relevance. The single-minded pursuit of policy relevance places writing firmly within the "Advice to the Prince" political tradition—also known as *principum specula* or *Fürstenspiegel*, literally "mirror for princes"—one that was popular in medieval Europe and has somehow been revived as a demand made of intellectual production in Africa.

What this tradition assumed was that the adviser would have the ear of the prince—and thus would have to be part of the court. Who are we, courtiers to the sovereign? It's helpful to start by comparing the demand for policy relevance in Africa to the tone of much US writing on international affairs, in which one consistently finds the pronoun "we"—as in, "in the face of genocide, what should *we* do?" Mainstream American scholars imagine themselves as being the ethical conscience of American global power, and so unhesitatingly say "we" to mean the US military machine, an inherent identification with US global violence. In African policy relevant writing, the key pronoun is "it"—as in, "what should it do," where "it" is the state (and the unacknowledged addressee is the donor who is to put pressure on the state to behave!). At least the distance between the intellectual and the state is recognized, but the underlying pretense that somehow state power can be guided by the good reasoning, or glossy policy briefing, of the intellectual, remains.

We don't need to go back to medieval traditions of scholarship to find more recent origins of this demand for relevant scholarship. In the colonial period, it came from the need of the colonial power to "know" the natives; in the independence period it came from the developmental state's demand that intellectual production be in the service of national development. In today's neo-colonial period, the increasingly hegemonic model in which the demand for policy relevance is made by donors is derived from a none-too-illustrious source: the American "Think Tank."

Historically, the Think Tank was an American Cold War invention (the name itself is an unmistakably American product), which referred to research institutions that were privately funded or funded by the military and that worked in close coordination with the government. The most famous was the RAND Corporation, funded by the US army. Thus, the very model of the Think Tank emerged out of the militarization of research and intellectual work in Cold War America, as part of the construction of the military-industrial complex.

Think Tanks serve a specific purpose, which can be seen if their political economy is considered. Supposedly independent Think Tanks are established by big corporations or wealthy capitalists—think of the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, or the Manhattan Institute. These institutes are created to serve as links in the chain tying capital to government, needed in order to provide intellectual legitimacy and apparent objectivity to the plutocratic policies favored by US corporations. Think Tanks write research reports in which not only

the questions but also the answers are determined ahead of time. They send slick fellows to appear on the nightly news and present their favored policies, to testify to government panels, to write legislation, and to consult "policy makers"— meeting all the benchmarks of policy relevance. All the while, the report itself is never read or subject to intellectual review or critique—it does not need to be because Think Tanks are privately funded and accountable only to their donors. In fact, it does not have to be read to do its work—the research report is the fetish that radiates legitimacy to the policy analyst, the legislation, the claims made by politicians and lobbyists.

The fiction under which Think Tanks operate is the traditional liberal one that "policy makers" are steered by rational argument, and so just need good information, information based on thorough research, in order to be convinced to make better policies. The idea that there is a direct causal relationship between the quality of research and its "policy efficacy" is, of course, nonsense—just look at the massive impact the "scientific research" disproving global warming has had!—as is the idea that the logic of scholarship can influence the logic of politics in militarized neoliberal states.

The demand for policy relevance and the celebration of Think Tanks in the US is part of a larger anti-intellectual, anti-university, and anti-education neoliberal agenda. It declares that universities operating according to an autonomous logic of scholarship are unnecessary—all they do is do "shelf research," without any service to society, filled with pampered professors spreading their favorite leftist political and social ideologies. It declares that "real" research is done by experts at specialized private organizations. Think Tanks do the research that matters because it can translate into policy for the state. Therefore, universities can be shut down, especially public universities, except as vocational schools, because Think Tanks can do the real work. Which they do more efficiently anyway, being private and thus supposedly competing in the market—which gives a newly literal meaning to the marketplace of ideas. The demand for policy relevance and the colonization of university scholarship by the Think Tank model is simply dangerous. The technique of the Think Tank has been extracted from its American context and exported to Africa. Now, African scholarship faces the demand for policy relevance on the Think Tank model, ignoring that that model worked in the US only because of its fundamental incorporation into the circuits of capital and state power. It ignores that the US Think Tank is a product of capitalist state power and demands that the African Think Tank reform state power. It ignores that the Think Tank only "works" in the US because it does not do research, it just mimics its outward signs. Here, instead of pretending to do research but having significant "policy relevance," like in the US, those Think Tanks that try to do research find it impossible to achieve "policy relevance." Two options open: either offer its services to the state, attempt to adhere to the American model in practice, and hope that the policy relevance of the "research" is ample compensation for its impoverishment; or offer its services to donors as the agents of state reform, but again with the problem of having to tailor research questions and answers to donor politics. Or

just give up on seeking policy relevance and go through the motions, putting out series upon series of glossy policy briefings, webcasts, stakeholder workshops, all with the knowledge that they do not really matter. This seems the dominant attitude—one of ironic distance in a context where it appears that research cannot have policy relevance, but you are being paid to pretend it does.

Or, finally, there is the option of seeking not policy relevance, but political relevance, where politics is not restricted to the depoliticized realm of unaccountable state technocrats and interventionist Western donors. But that sets research institutions squarely against the significant forces that are arrayed behind the Think Tank model— and without social allies, such experiments may be short-lived. For now, perhaps the most viable option is to be satisfied with policy irrelevance, based upon a healthy fear of co-optation and a commitment to the autonomy of scholarship.

List of Working Papers