

Preserving the Future through the Past: Collective Memory and Immobility in Adversity

Abstract

While prevailing research on migration predominantly concentrates on individuals fleeing adversities, this approach results in an under-representation of communities that exhibit a desire for immobility even in adversity. Thus, the decision of some community members to resist displacement and stay put in communities exposed to adversity, such as violent conflict – eco-violence, is under-explored; this article addresses this gap. In this article, grounded in the concept of collective memory, a reflexive thematic approach is used to analyse data collected in May 2022 from focus group participants in Benue and Nasarawa states in the North Central region of Nigeria. Among other things, the findings highlight the role of collective and materialised memories in shaping the attachments of community members to their ancestral land and their subsequent voluntary adoption of immobility. This article enriches the literature by presenting a perspective on how people’s memories shape the dynamics that support their quest for immobility within their conflict-affected communities, in this case, in the Nigerian context.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Immobility, Nigeria, Eco-violence, Migration.

Olumba, E. (2024) ‘Preserving the Future through the Past: Collective Memory and Immobility in Adversity’, *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. DOI:10.1037/pac0000760.

Introduction

The Sahel region of Africa has witnessed violent conflicts over water and land resources, or eco-violence¹, for several decades. These disputes involve several different social groups and occur at inter-communal and intra-communal levels (Bassett, 1988; Onwuzuruigbo, 2013); they also unfold between states, for instance, the conflict between Senegal and Mauritania in the 1990s (Olumba *et al.*, 2022, p. 2078). Eco-violence frequently arises between nomadic Fulani herders and sedentary farmers of various ethnic groups in rural communities across the Sahel in Africa, resulting in thousands of deaths, the destruction of many villages, and the displacement of millions (Jacquemot, 2022; Kojo *et al.*, 2023; Nwankwo, 2024).

In Nigeria, violent conflicts have transcended various historical epochs, with local peacebuilding strategies managing them over the decades. Eco-violence in the Middle Belt has been part of the lived experiences of its residents since pre-colonial and colonial times (Orkar, 1979; Makar, 1994; Ochonu, 2008, 2014), escalating recently to unprecedented levels (Olumba, 2022). The “Ring Fence Policy” of 1917 by the British colonial administration, which aimed to demarcate Tiv and Jukun territories to halt Tiv encroachment into Jukun land for fertile soil, was among the colonial policies that exacerbated eco-violence in the Middle Belt (Dorward, 1969; Ityavkase and Gimba, 2021). These conflicts have emerged not just between the Tiv and Jukun, other ethnic groups in the Middle Belt region, but also with the nomadic Fulani herders. The conflicts between nomadic Fulani herders and sedentary farmers became apparent from 2010 onwards (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010; Sayne, 2011).

Eco-violence does pose significant challenges due to the mass murders and destruction associated with it (Nwankwo, 2023; Olumba, 2023), but it also greatly impacts the mobility and immobility patterns of people. Eco-violence between social groups in Nigeria is garnering increased scholarly attention (Nwankwo, 2020; Ogu, 2020; Ojo, 2023; Olumba, 2023); in contrast, most research on the (im)mobility of Nigerians is increasingly focusing on cross-border movements. The immobility experiences of Nigerians across the country’s borders have received greater scholarly attention (Haugen, 2012; Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019; Adebayo, 2022), than the internal immobility dynamics. This suggests that the “mobility bias” (Schewel, 2020,

¹ Eco-violence entails conflicts that are most often violent and occur between social groups or state actors over the struggle to access and control water and other agricultural resources (Olumba *et al.*, 2022).

p. 332) that highlights migration issues over immobility issues is mirrored in immobility studies by a bias favouring “immobility experiences abroad” over those within Nigeria.

Previous studies have advocated for an exploration into why community members choose immobility in conflict-afflicted areas (Esparza *et al.*, 2020; Marston, 2020; Braithwaite, Cox and Ghosn, 2021; Masullo, 2021, p. 889). Responding to such calls, this article, anchored on the concept of collective memory, addresses this empirical gap by shedding light on how people’s memories influence their immobility preferences in communities affected by conflict. The discussion presented here is one of the findings of a qualitative study conducted in Agatu, Benue State, and Eggon-Nasarawa, Nasarawa State. This article argues that collective memories passed down within families and across generations, along with materialised memories associated with their farmlands and fish sources, fuel the quest for immobility in conflict-affected communities.

These memories (materialised and collective) also fuel and are fueled by the contentions over indigeneity and ownership rights of communal lands, aligning with the notion that “... *there is no place without self; and no self without place*” (Casey, 2001, p. 406, italics in original). Extending this interplay, (Gamsakhurdia, 2019, p. 168) elucidates, “the self always locates himself or herself in a particular temporal position somewhere between the past and the future”. In other words, individuals’ existence is tied to their location, positioning them along a timeline between the past and future (Casey, 2001, p. 406; Gamsakhurdia, 2019, p. 168). Thus, a place is void without people; without a distinct place, people are unanchored in the continuum of past and future.

This article enriches the literature on migration and conflict studies by presenting a nuanced perspective on how people’s memories shape the dynamics that influence their search for immobility in adversity, particularly in the Nigerian context. This article is structured as follows: It begins by reviewing the existing literature on immobility in north-central Nigeria, commonly referred to as the Middle Belt. Then it explains the concept of collective memory, emphasising its applicability and significance in the Nigerian context, followed by an overview of the methods employed, which encompass data collection and analysis methods, among other things. Subsequently, the article delves into how people’s memories influence their immobility preferences, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and a conclusion.

Immobility in North Central Nigeria

Immobility entails the consistent and habitual act of remaining in a particular place at a given time and can be viewed as a social process (Scott, 2019, p. 140; Schewel, 2020, p. 329). Although research on community members who choose immobility is limited and migration studies within the Global South have often overlooked such groups (Barcus and Werner, 2017), this neglect is even more pronounced for those who remain in conflict areas (Biehler, 2023). Some studies characterise those who do not migrate as “trapped” or “left behind” populations (Nawrotzki and DeWaard, 2018; Khanian, Serpoush and Gheitarani, 2019; Ayeb-Karlsson, Kniveton and Cannon, 2020; Mallick, Sultana and Bennett, 2020; Blondin, 2021a; Santos and Mourato, 2022; Yee *et al.*, 2022). However, emerging research posits that many who remain amidst adversity do so based on voluntary decisions (Barcus and Werner, 2017; Blondin, 2021b; McMichael *et al.*, 2021a; Santos and Mourato, 2022; Upadhyay *et al.*, 2023).

Many communities in some conflict-affected regions are not ‘trapped populations’ but empowered agents with decision making capabilities. They sustain their immobility in conflict using self-help measures to protect their villages, resist displacement, and remain in place due to place attachment, social networks, economic factors, and family reasons (Adhikari, 2003; Maxted, 2003; Hoffman, 2007; Blocq, 2014); this article adds to this discourse.

There is a lack of studies focusing on the immobility experiences of Nigerians living within the country. Extant research has primarily focused on the experiences of those who have moved across Nigeria’s borders (Haugen, 2012; Ahrens, 2013; Veale and Andres, 2014; Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019; Berriane, 2020; Gross-Wyrtzen, 2020; Iranzo, 2021).

However, some studies have examined the lived experiences of communities that choose to remain in their conflict-affected villages, which require them to pay taxes and conform to the rules imposed by non-state actors controlling their communities (Higazi, 2016; de Montclos, 2020). The few studies on immobility in Nigeria have concentrated on people’s experiences in IDP camps and other camp-like settings (see, Ogbozor, 2016; Shehu and Abba, 2020; Yikwab and Tade, 2021).

Consequently, it is crucial to explore people’s immobility experiences, especially those who stay put in conflict-affected communities in Nigeria – in this case, exploring the role of memories in enabling immobility within some conflict-affected communities in the Nigerian Middle Belt.

Exploring Immobility through a Conceptual Lens of Collective Memory

Memory is a creative process of reconstructive remembering, as opposed to merely retrieving from a stored collection of visual imagery (Awad, 2020, p. 151); it is a future-oriented, creative, and constructive process (Valsiner, 2014, p. 118; Gamsakhurdia, 2019, p. 169). According to studies, there are two types of conscious memory: semantic memory – which allows the remembering of basic knowledge (Corballis, 2019; Michaelian, Perrin and Sant’Anna, 2020) – and episodic memory – which provides access to personally experienced events (Suddendorf and Corballis, 2007, p. 301).

Since episodic memory entails recalling either actual past events or events that could have occurred but did not (van Boven, Kane and McGraw, 2009, p. 133), it possesses a reconstructive nature (Szpunar and McDermott, 2009; van Boven, Kane and McGraw, 2009), which renders it prone to discrepancies from actual occurrences due to susceptibility to distortion (Suddendorf, Addis and Corballis, 2009, p. 5; van Boven, Kane and McGraw, 2009, p. 133).

The susceptibility of memories to distortion (van Boven, Kane and McGraw, 2009, p. 133) invariably shapes commemorations and recollections of past events. Similarly, commemorations solidify people’s shared memories of events and help preserve these collective memories (Hutton, 1988, p. 315). Individual memories are shaped by group communication and reflect the collective memory of the community (Glassberg, 1996; Gagnepain *et al.*, 2020); exploring how dialogue with others establishes and confirms these memories is insightful (Glassberg, 1996, p. 10) and underscores the importance of group-level data collection for studies like this. As individuals create new personal pasts, nations construct collective narratives (Lowenthal, 1975, p. 33) to fulfil diverse collective interests (Kelman, 1999; Misztal, 2010; Villamil, 2021).

Definitions of collective memory vary as scholars debate how individuals and social processes influence each other (Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023). It has been defined as acting as a symbolic resource to create meaning by merging different perspectives on historical events (De Saint-Laurent, 2014). Others have described it more thoroughly as representing a specific community's history, factual or fabricated; this history comprises a set of shared memories

among individuals within that community, which are communicated and preserved as group memories, shaping their collective identity and behaviour (Glassberg, 1996; Obradović, 2016; Hirst, Yamashiro and Coman, 2018; Villamil, 2021; Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023).

For this article, "... collective memory serves an identity function, nourishing a group's sense of identity and continuity" (Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023, p. 7). In essence, there are "three main functions of collective memory: the first relates to *collective identity*, the second relates to *social schemata*, and the third functions as a *means of action* or a political decision-making tool" (Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023, p. 7 italics added). In other words, it defines the essence of a group, influences shared perspectives, and directs actions.

Thus, exploring immobility through the lens of collective memory has the potential to offer nuanced perspectives, showcasing the influence of people's quest for immobility. According to Glassberg (1996a, p. 19), shared narratives can transform ordinary spaces into meaningful or 'storied' places within a community. Thus, these 'storied' places will carry the collective memories of the people interacting in them, potentially making such places desirable. "Whereas psychologists connect sense of place to personal identity and recollection, cultural geographers and folklorists connect it to group communication and collective memory" (Glassberg, 1996, p. 19). This article aligns with the stance of cultural geographers by connecting a *sense of place* – the bond between people and places and the meanings that people ascribe to those places (Kudryavtsev, Stedman and Krasny, 2012, p. 231) – with *collective memory*. The article explores these "bonds" people have with their communities that make them desire to stay put despite the conflict therein, through the lens of their collective memories.

Among the factors that reinforce these "bonds" is the notion that people's memories can be materialised (Sesma, 2022), further solidifying their quest for immobility. Memories can be materialised in a 'cultural memoryscape' (Basu, 2013; Bond and Bond, 2022; Sesma, 2022). The memoryscape symbolises the fusion of collective memory, contemporary experience, and life's materiality, providing a defined space and social arena within a physical landscape where individuals and groups remember and interact with the past in the contemporary moment (Sesma, 2022, p. 25). The 'cultural memoryscape', or sites of memory, hold memories that include explicit forms, such as written records, landscapes, and photographs, and implicit forms, such as oral histories and traditions (Basu, 2013, p. 130).

Materialised memories involve producing tangible objects that encapsulate ideas and stories conveyed typically through spoken or written language (Buchli and Lucas, 2001, p. 13; Dyke,

2019, p. 212). Others argue that it involves bringing people's personal past to life through interactive devices that display digital photos, combining internal and external remembering (Hoven, 2014, p. 381) or public art (Bond and Bond, 2022). According to Sesma (2022, p. 26), materialised memory.

represent the act of piecing together object, story, space. It is the process by which personal and collective memories become linked to objects or specific spaces through a variety of mechanisms, such as personal recall, storytelling, public commemoration, or (re)use of valued artifacts of the past. Materializing memory on a particular landscape creates a memoryscape that links the past and the present through material and social interactions (Sesma, 2022, p. 26).

Memories can be materialised in various forms: home movies captured by video cameras (Aasman, Fickers and Wachelder, 2018), material artefacts and souvenirs of the 'old home' that embody stories and acquire meaning during family remembrance (Kreisslová and Nosková, 2019, p. 177), and crafted items like embroidered books, dresses, pillows, and picture frames that bridge "...the past into the present, the past into the future" (Saad, 2019, p. 57). Additionally, narratives such as Palestinian stories and daydreams (Sesma 2022, p. 25), as well as the harmonious integration of "object, story, and space" within a landscape, serve as conduits for materialising memories (Saad, 2019, p.57).

Building upon prior research (Aasman, Fickers and Wachelder, 2018; Saad, 2019; Sesma, 2022) and the traditional practice of transmitting memories, communal land (transferred through generations via the male members of the family), and other resources within the family in Nigeria (Ike, 1984, p. 472; Makar, 1994; Adedayo, Oyun and Kadeba, 2010), it can be argued that *materialising memory* involves assembling and linking personal or shared memories to objects, places, and narratives (endearing or traumatic) using the past to preserve the present into the future.

Integrating the creation and sharing of collective memory with the act of materialising memories offers the potential to understand better how the past (memories) influences people's present and future. In the Nigerian context, it provides a lens to comprehend and explain the "bonds" between people and their community, in this case, elucidating why they choose immobility even in adversity.

Methods

This article stems from a study conducted in May 2022 in Nigeria. The study used focus group discussions to collect data from 54 respondents from conflict-affected communities in Benue and Nasarawa states, Nigeria.

Participants

Given the immobility perspective of the study, it was pertinent to conduct research among sedentary farmers who have a fixed residence, unlike the nomadic Fulani, who are inherently mobile. The study focused primarily on a purposefully selected community whose members chose to stay put despite ongoing conflict. To enrich and triangulate the data, interviews were conducted with both displaced persons and those who returned after displacement. To truly understand why some people stay, it is essential to know why others choose to move (Mata-Codesal, 2015, p. 2283; Sirkeci and Cohen, 2016, p. 383).

Five focus groups and two mini-focus groups were held with separate sessions for men and women. In community O, two focus groups included members of the indigenous community who stayed put: one with 11 men and another with eight women. Additionally, two mini-focus groups and two FGDs were held with 11 men and 12 women who fled to the O community for refuge. In Nasarawa State, an FGD was conducted with nine men of GD people in the IG community.

During the focus group discussions, participants were presented with structured questions followed by subsequent follow-up inquiries on their lived experiences within their communities, especially in relation to the conflict and its influence on their decisions about immobility. They were asked about the motivations behind their choices to flee or stay within their communities and the significance they ascribe to their experiences of immobility, displacement, or return. Each focus group session lasted about an hour, while the mini-focus groups took approximately thirty minutes each. The study was designed so that community members could narrate their experiences collectively as their voices reflected those of the community and its contexts (Seaton, 2008, p. 304), and the conflict is always a generalised adversity in the community when it occurs. Accounts help determine incentives for specific actions, particularly in precarious situations and under uncertainty (Winchester and Green, 2019, p. 276). As such, their subjective narratives, which are presented as ‘collective testimony’ (Townsend, 2021), formed the data for the study.

Data Analysis

The narratives of the community members were recorded in Pidgin using password-protected voice recorders, allowing me control from data collection to transcription and analysis. In addition to the challenges of insecurity due to conflicts in those locations, there were other notable concerns. Some respondents unfamiliar with Pidgin were excluded due to language barriers. Using a language other than Pidgin could have potentially led to data loss in translation and difficulties securing transcription services, given my inability to speak the local languages. This method may draw criticism for favouring more elite respondents; however, socio-economic distinctions in these rural communities are minimal, and Pidgin is commonly spoken across Nigeria.

The collected data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis at semantic and latent levels (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This analysis was conducted using a six-step process: familiarisation with the data, initial code generation, generating initial themes, reviewing the themes, refining the themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up, as outlined by Braun et al. (2019) and Campbell et al. (2021).

The analysis was conducted to uncover explicit and underlying assumptions shaping the narratives rather than merely interpreting words at face value (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Although the narratives of the respondents may not have explicitly mentioned terms such as 'collective memory' or 'materialised memories', the underlying sentiments expressed by community members in the focus groups align with these concepts when analysed at the latent level. Drawing on Hopwood (2010, p. 107), the absence of direct quotes is not an oversight but emphasises the challenge of using brief excerpts to capture overarching themes. Given the unique nature of the narratives and contexts of the respondents, I used semantic and latent-level analyses, with a couple of quotes incorporated.

Ethics/Positionality

The ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Royal Holloway, University of London, with approval number ID 2667. The pre-discussion screening, the *Screening Interview and Distress Protocol* (Draucker, Martsolf and Poole, 2009), excluded community members likely to experience emotional distress from participating in focus groups. While this limited the range of voices, it prioritised the emotional well-being and mental health of participants, highlighting ethical responsibility to prevent possible harm.

Although connected to Nigeria and familiar with Agatu, I am not from the Middle Belt but the southeastern region. As such, I identify as an 'in-between' researcher (Kipnis, Bebek and

Bröckerhoff, 2021, p. 407). All standard ethical protocols were observed, including obtaining ethical approval and informed consent from all respondents. Consideration was given to the safety of both myself and the respondents, as well as to protecting the identities of the respondents, which is why the names of some communities have been anonymised.

Findings

In the study, several themes emerged regarding what influenced and sustained people's immobility during violent conflicts. The following sections will detail how collective and materialised memories influence immobility among community members in conflict-affected areas.

Collective Memory and Indigeneity

In my data analysis, McKinnon's insights into the intricate relationship between memory and space in shaping identities (McKinnon *et al.*, 2016, p. 1121) align with my findings. Furthermore, these identities manifest within specific locations or spaces, bridging the past and the future (Casey, 2001, p. 406; Lado Gamsakhurdia, 2019, p. 168). In Nigeria, attachment to ancestral or pre-colonial roots is symbolised by an identity centred on natural resources – water, forests – from one's ancestral community, influencing access and control (Njoku, 2005; Umejesi, 2015, p. 52).

Ancestral lineages and primordial affiliations, rather than place of birth or residency, determine indigeneity in Nigeria (Higazi, 2016; Bamidele, 2018; Mang and Ehrhardt, 2018) and are closely linked to land ownership (Asiyanbola, 2010, p. 63). These ties profoundly influence ownership claims in local communities, often excluding those without such connections (Umejesi, 2015). In Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt, land forms an essential part of identity and community foundations, affecting access and inheritance customs (Uchendu, 1979; Onwuzuruigbo, 2013). In the O community, as in Kiribati, land is intricately linked to its culture, identity, and status within the community (Hermann and Kempf, 2017, p. 250; Yates *et al.*, 2022, p. 260). These practices underscore the roles of primordial ties in defining “natives” and “settlers” and in the efforts to secure and reclaim land.

The classification of individuals in Nigeria as indigenes or settlers of a specific location is controversial (Higazi, 2016; Bamidele, 2018; Mang and Ehrhardt, 2018). In Nigeria, a significant distinction within the citizenship framework categorises individuals as indigenes or settlers (Bamidele, 2018, p. 55). In regions like the Middle Belt, this becomes particularly

problematic for community members due to their dependence on land for livelihood. Indigeneship is claimed solely based on familial lineage by the ‘natives’ (Higazi, 2016, p. 370; Bamidele, 2018, p. 55; Mang and Ehrhardt, 2018, p. 468).

To be considered a ‘native’ instead of a ‘settler’, one must trace ancestors to an ‘original land’; settlers, even if born in an area, are seen as temporary dwellers who might return to their ‘home’ (Bamidele, 2018, p. 55). Hence, despite long-term occupancy spanning numerous generations, the Fulani and Hausa people are not recognised as indigenous in the Middle Belt (Higazi, 2016, p. 370). Being recognised as an indigene often depends on the narratives passed down through family generations, indicating who belongs to the village and who does not. As a result, indigeneity leans on collective memories for validation. In this context, collective memories shape the people’s collective identity, their social schemata, and guide collective action (Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023, p. 7).

A respondent emphasised that being labelled an ‘igira’ or settler significantly influenced his decision to return to his community. Many other respondents echoed this sentiment.

Moderator: Did you have any issues with the community?

We cannot deny that we never experienced disagreement as human beings; we had some small problems with them (#7-EggNas-M)².

Moderator: What kind of problem?

A problem of getting tired of supporting someone (#7-EggNas-M).

Moderator: Is there anything else wrong?

When we went to Lafia, some Lafia people were calling us *igira* (some people interjected to indicate that it meant stranger or non-native). When they called us that, it made us sad, and that brought some problems #5-EggNas-M.

‘Igira’ is a derogatory label for strangers or non-natives in the community. Therefore, regardless of how many generations an individual’s ancestors may have lived in a particular area, they cannot claim indigenous status in the EH community if their father’s ancestry is not connected to the predominant inhabitants of the community. Likewise, GD persons who

² These are codes used to identify the respondents who participated in the focus group discussion sessions.

migrate from EH to other villages will always be classified as *igira* outside their community. One's status as a "native" (indigene), or settler in Nigeria determines whether they are granted or denied access to social, economic, and political opportunities within specific regions or government institutions (Bamidele, 2018; Mang and Ehrhardt, 2018, p. 475). As a result, being categorised as an *igira* in Nigeria carries substantial negative repercussions, making it difficult for persons displaced from their 'native' land to survive outside their community.

Thus, based on collective memories, the GD people establish their identity and the common ways of thinking; considering the implications of residing in locations different from those defined by their collective memories, and given the evident consequences in the Nigerian context, the group took collective decisions and actions to reclaim their immobility. Furthermore, due to these prevalent issues, the legal rights associated with Nigerian citizenship, particularly in terms of equal access to opportunities and resources, often become secondary in these local contexts. This distinction, deeply rooted in collective memory, effectively creates two categories of citizens in the Nigerian context: the "native" and the "settler".

In Nigeria, people preserve and propagate indigeneity by disseminating both constructed and valid familial histories and recollections. Within communities, memories are maintained and passed down through generations through habitual residence, ensuring the transfer of cultural heritage to future generations. Land and indigeneity play pivotal roles in shaping and disseminating collective memory, which serves as a foundation for preserving notions of communal land ownership and personal identity (Aluaigba, 2011; Bamidele, 2022). It is important to note that disputes over land and indigeneity have sparked violent conflicts in the Middle Belt for over a century (Maiangwa, 2017; Bamidele, 2022). These conflicts give rise to narratives inherited across generations, embedding collective memories that further influence land and indigenous matters. However, issues related to indigeneity and the lived experiences surrounding them also shape collective memory (Higazi, 2016; Maiangwa, 2020). Thus, indigeneity influences collective memories and vice versa. Such memories subsequently impact collective identity, social norms, and collective actions (Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023, p. 7).

In the Middle Belt, historical episodes of violence have left lasting negative marks on collective memories (Olumba, 2023, pp. 10–11). When these memories intersect with present-day social tensions, mainly as they are represented and objectified in contemporary events, they shape

collective identities and boundaries and often lead to aggressive collective actions against those seen as outsiders or settlers (Misztal, 2010; Villamil, 2021).

For more than a century, the Agatu people have been exposed to external threats, necessitating the defence of their ancestral land (Ochonu, 2014, p. 120; Olumba, 2023). Narratives about their ancestral ties to the land and the attempts by “settlers” to claim it have reinforced their resolve to maintain control over their communal land. The Agatu local government area is infamous for the “Agatu Massacres”, a term that describes a series of deadly attacks by alleged herder militias over multiple days across several communities, resulting in the death of over 500 people (Jimoh, 2016; Mayah, 2016; Uwazuruike, 2020; Nwankwo, 2023). The “Agatu Massacres” exemplify a recent incident similar to what rural communities in the Middle Belt experienced during the colonial period (Nwankwo, 2023; Olumba, 2023, p. 6).

Collective memory provides meaning to the present, continuity, and an understanding of the past (De Saint-Laurent, 2014, p. 22). Additionally, the past plays a crucial role in shaping our perceptions of the present and the future (de Saint-Laurent and Obradović, 2019). In other words, collective memory interconnects our past, present, and future experiences and provides context and meaning to events and experiences. This sentiment was echoed by many community members in the focus group, as illustrated by a statement from a respondent in the O community:

This land is where I was born, and this is my father’s land. Wherever I run to, I will become a stranger and may become destitute. Until then, I have been a sustainable person. Why should I become a beggar with my family? I will rather stay if it means to die; let me die. If I die in my house for what belongs to me, let me die. This is why I did not flee. If they want to kill me, let them kill me (#9-OIU-M).

This quote exemplifies the firm conviction of the community members about their inherent right to their ‘ancestral land’ and their readiness to make ultimate sacrifices for its protection; it underscores the role of collective memory in driving immobility in conflict-affected communities, even without state support. Collective memory in this context reinforces a group’s sense of identity and reason for existence (De Saint-Laurent, 2014, p. 25). The deep connection community members have to their birthplace, often referred to as their ‘father’s land’, highlights the inherent link between identity and location (Mckinnon *et al.*, 2016, p. 1121). The concept of *vakavanua*, translated as “the way of the land,” further emphasises this

connection. This concept articulates the interrelationship between land, people, tradition, and socio-economic structures (Hermann and Kempf, 2017, p. 250), highlighting land's central role in people's social fabric.

According to Glassberg, 'historical consciousness and place consciousness are inextricably intertwined; we attach histories to places, and the environmental value we attach to a place comes largely through the memories and historical associations we have with it' (Glassberg, 1996, p. 17). In other words, history and place are intricately connected, and the value we attach to land comes from memories. "Here the 'soil' figures as the basis of distinctive mores and folkways" (Williams and Smith, 1983, p. 505). Thus, the "soil" forms the basis for socio-cultural norms. Stories and memories passed down within their communities influence their cultural practices, collective identity, and decisions or actions to remain (Heux, 2023, p. 7). As such, even in the face of eco-violence, members of the O community choose immobility. Concerns about becoming a settler or facing destitution in unfamiliar territories further fuel their commitment to staying put.

This contextualised notion of collective memory accurately captures the character of collective memory as perceived and experienced by community members in O and EH communities, underscoring its significant impact on their collective actions and identity. To secure their present and future *lifescapes*³, they use collective memories of the past to assert ownership over ancestral lands they are determined to keep by any means necessary⁴. Lubkemann (2008) describes displacement as a "transformation of lifescapes," indicating a situation in which people are uprooted from traditional settings and restricted access to vital resources and connections for achieving their life goals. By choosing to remain, these community members strive to preserve their immobility, which enables them to protect their ancestral lands and secure their inheritance for future generations; thereby, they resist the transformation of their lifescapes.

Consequently, in the Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State, the determination of some community members to remain in their communities affected by conflict (despite lacking support from security agencies, leading them to rely on self-help measures) and their understanding of indigeneity are influenced by collective memories. These memories

³ Lifescape refers to the human and material resources that social actors can access to live out their socially constructed life trajectories (Convery *et al.*, 2005; Lubkemann, 2008, p. 192).

⁴ Portions of this paragraph and a few others in this article were made available in an earlier version on the preprint platform of the *American Political Science Association* (DOI: doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2023-gxbnh).

significantly influence people's collective identities and their decisions to stay put, even in challenging circumstances.

Materialised Memories

As previously highlighted, the memoryscape represents a blend of collective memory and contemporary experience (Sesma, 2022, p. 25). Here, "contemporary experience" refers to recent lived experiences, which encompasses the materialisation of memories. The memory materialisation process transforms memories into both explicit forms, like written records, landscapes, and photographs, and implicit forms, such as oral histories and traditions (Basu, 2013, p. 130). In the study locations, these memories manifest in explicit forms (communal lands and fish ponds) and implicit forms (lifescapes and perceptions of victimisation). As discussed, families in the Middle Belt region pass down communal land, identity, significant landmarks, and oral history within specific contexts. Through these practices, they materialise memories (Sesma, 2022) and establish 'memoryscapes' (Basu, 2002), ensuring continuity from the past to the present and shaping the future.

Through the materialisation of memories as a result of the shared lived experiences on communal lands and fish ponds, as well as into implicit forms like expectations of lifescapes and perceptions of victimisation, memories are kept alive among the community members, which endears them to their community. To ensure the continuity of their lifescape, for instance, demands their continual habitation within their communal land in order to access essential social relationship and resources required by them to live out their lives as they are used to.

For many members of the GD community during displacement, returning to their village was of great significance, while displacement evoked a longing for their prior "village life" or lifescape. They fondly remembered the landscape, food and sense of community of their days in the village, strengthening their quest for immobility. Many of the respondents shared this opinion;

Moderator: During the conflict, were the river and fish part of the things that caused the conflict?

Yes, of course (#6-EggNas-M).

Moderator: So you were fighting over fish and the river as well?

Yes (#6-EggNas-M).

Moderator: When you fled from EH, what were you missing?

One was my fish and properties (#6-EggNas-M).

I missed my farming because outside I did not get any plot to farm on while living outside the community (#7-EggNas-M).

Moderator: Why did you run?

(Long pause)

I ran to save my life (#7-EggNas-M).

I fled to save my life and family. You cannot duplicate your life (#8-EggNas-M).

When analysed semantically or at face value, the respondents' comments highlight the benefits of living in their villages, which they missed during displacement. However, this statement has a more profound implication beyond the lack of resources in displacement. It underscores the importance of materialised memories, accessible primarily in their community. Farming and fishing offer families livelihoods and settings for interactions, storytelling, and passing down narratives through generations, in essence, the materialisation of memories. Consequently, the communal land and fish ponds serve as sites for preserving and materialising memories.

The quotes above highlight the respondents' memories during their displacement compared to their current experiences in their community. He stated that 'while there', in displacement in Lafia, they missed things readily available in their village. This disconnection from their memory sites during displacement deprived them of familiar resources and social connections, intensifying their desire to return. At the collective level, these memories stem from their lived experiences in the village rather than mere individual recollections of a place and space.

When respondents discussed the drawbacks of displacement, including the loss of access to farmland and fishing areas, their comments highlighted the importance of physical resources. They conveyed a sense of being cut off from memory sites where they believed they had better opportunities to access essential resources like landscapes and community ties. This detachment from their memory sites – where memories are materialised – was a significant impetus that influenced their quest to return and regain their immobility in their community.

Consequently, regaining access to these crucial components of their lives – communal land and lifescape – became paramount, to the extent of fighting to reclaim it.

Although materialised memory anchors the past in the present, it can also expose ‘memory sites’ to potential threats (Mckinnon *et al.*, 2016, p. 1122). In areas like the Middle Belt, where land disputes are prevalent, the materialised memories of village lifescapes and accounts of others’ victimisation due to eco-violence and displacement increase the perceived risks of living there. This perception further reinforces the desire for immobility among residents as they seek to avoid experiencing the adversities and devastation others have encountered.

Similarly, the views expressed by the respondents in the EH community in Nasarawa reflected those of the displaced men who sought refuge in the O community. Here are some quotes from respondents displaced from other communities taking refuge in the O community:

Moderator: What is the disadvantage of fleeing?

No matter how you live here, you cannot have the same comfort that you get when living in your community. Here, we do not have access to the volume of land that I was used to; you can only rent a small portion because we do not have enough money to buy land, and therefore you will not have enough to produce. Unlike in my village, where I have a vast amount of land to farm on freely. The disadvantage is that being here is not better than living in my village, which is our land. That is the disadvantage (#6-OIU-M-IDP).

In our village, we have enough access to fish to eat, whereas here it is scarce. In addition, in our village, the land is more fertile than the land here and as such, the farm produce is not good enough. The disadvantage is that, as we are here, there is no fish and scarcity of everything (#9-OIU-M-IDP).

There are not enough lands to rent and farm on, unlike in our village, where we have enough land to farm on (#unknown-OIU-M-IDP)⁵.

Comparing their memories of village life with their present circumstances intensifies their longing to return. In this context, fond memories of village activities, such as fishing and farming linked to their communal land, powerfully drive their urge to return and maintain their

⁵ These excerpts are in an earlier version of this article that was made available on the *American Political Science Association's* preprint platforms (DOI: doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2023-gxbnh).

immobility in the village. The land in their village, bearing materialised memories, holds immense significance for them.

Therefore, in the Nigerian context, the landscape encompasses the communal land and other memory sites, where memories materialise in explicit or implicit forms (Basu, 2013) and are transformed into tangible objects. Preserving these communal lands is of immense significance to rural community members, prompting them to take extreme measures to ensure their protection and continuity. This deep commitment underscores their profound connection to these materialised memories and their bonds to their community. It underscores the crucial role of materialised memories in shaping community members' relationships with cultural traditions and spaces and their resolve to remain in their community.

Discussion

These findings offer a contextualised understanding of the role of memories in enabling immobility within some communities in the Nigerian Middle Belt, where eco-violence is prevalent. This contextualised role of memory involves families, groups, leaders, or institutions creating, disseminating, and influencing collective and materialised memories of places, spaces, objects, and cultures. The goal is to safeguard and maintain the security and continuity of these memories and their lifescapes within a 'cultural memoryscape' or communal land. An analysis of community narratives underscores the influence of collective and materialised memories on the desire to remain in conflict-affected areas.

It demonstrates that collective and materialised memories significantly influence some people's staying behaviour – immobility – amidst conflict in the O community. This influence extends to the desire of members of the GD community to return to their ancestral homes and the aspirations of IDPs from the EH community living in the O community to do the same. Such memories shape the pragmatic factors driving their immobility quest, like preserving their lifescape in rural settings.

Derived from the narratives or collective memories passed down through generations, people's shared connections to and ownership of their ancestral lands form an integral part of their lifescape, embodying their desire for immobility, ensuring socio-cultural and historical continuity. This communal land, where memories are materialised, serves as a platform for community members to interact with each other and the environment, relating to their past and present, and envisioning their perceived future within their communities. Thus, a link exists

between how collective and materialised memory influences immobility in conflict-affected communities.

In these communities, narratives passed down through generations and contemporary experiences – of materialising memories – strengthen bonds to communal land. This connection deepens the significance they attribute to their land, driving their desire for immobility to safeguard the future by drawing from the past. This preservation involves creating and sharing collective and materialised memories associated with distinct places, spaces, objects, and cultures to ensure the continuity of their lifescapes within these communities. Although these findings are specific to the contexts studied, they offer insights into understanding rural communities in the Sahel and other parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America, where challenges persist in accessing and controlling communal resources. Despite adversities such as violent conflicts or natural disasters, some community members remain steadfast in their decision to stay put.

In the literature, studies have already identified factors that influence immobility during adversity, particularly in regions experiencing environmental degradation, such as the Pacific and Asia. Such studies pinpointed the role of information about life elsewhere and the uncertainty of relocation as factors that influence immobility in communities exposed to adversities (Werner and Barcus, 2009; McMichael *et al.*, 2021a, p. 108). These findings align with issues related to “natives” and “settlers,” which have roots in collective memory and indigeneity in Nigeria that influence immobility among community members in the study locations. Due to uncertainties or challenges deeply rooted in collective memories and indigeneity, which dictate access to resources and opportunities in Nigeria, people opt to stay within their communities, drawing from their ancestral narratives and ties.

Other research highlights that place attachment and communal togetherness enhance immobility in adversity (Werner and Barcus, 2009; Barcus and Werner, 2017; McMichael *et al.*, 2021a; Santos and Mourato, 2022; Upadhyay *et al.*, 2023, p. 7). Upadhyay *et al.* (2023, p. 7) note the benefits of access to local spaces and autonomy they might not find elsewhere. Displaced persons taking refuge in Lafia and Community O lamented a lost connection to their way of life. Factors such as social networks, cultural norms, land ownership, and cultural connections significantly influence immobility (Werner and Barcus, 2009; Hermann and Kempf, 2017; McMichael *et al.*, 2021b, p. 108; Santos and Mourato, 2022). Dori, Hagenzanker and Mazzilli (2024) highlight that spirituality and belief systems also impact immobility.

The pervasive influences of collective memory on indigeneity and the quest for immobility in the study areas encapsulate these sentiments.

Familiarity with village life and commitment to traditional livelihoods are identified as key motivators for staying put (Werner and Barcus, 2009; McMichael *et al.*, 2021b, p. 108; Yates *et al.*, 2022). These factors are related to the roles of collective and materialised memories that reinforce identity and continuity (De Saint-Laurent, 2014; Heux, Clifford and Souchay, 2023).

The study locations are notably linked to eco-violence, contrasting with the abovementioned studies addressing different adversities. However, factors that influence immobility in conflict-affected settings, as noted in previous research, remain consistent in Nigerian communities choosing to stay put with state support using armed resistance (Lar, 2019; Olojo, 2020; Higazi, 2022) or with self-help measures in Nepal, Columbia, and Sierra Leone (Adhikari, 2003; Maxted, 2003; Hoffman, 2007; Masullo, 2021; Jentsch and Masullo, 2022). The influence of collective and materialised memory on collective behaviour may vary across communities and types of adversity; yet, these memories can significantly shape staying behaviour in areas with long-standing generational residences and ancestral ties. Areas such as the Middle Belt (Ochonu, 2008; Aluaigba, 2011).

This article has illuminated how the collective and materialised memories of people offer a nuanced understanding of the deep bond between community members and their ancestral lands manifested in their pursuit of immobility. Despite being derived from a limited sample, the findings provide valuable insights. They suggest that sustainable conflict resolution strategies should account for the role of collective and materialised memories in shaping non-normative collective behaviour, such as people insisting on living in conflict zones. Incorporating mechanisms that respect and promote the immobility desires of affected populations could enhance the effectiveness of these strategies. This article suggests that the desire for immobility in these communities deserves support. This support would give them a stronger voice in decision-making and should be provided by the state to enable them to fully embrace their lifescapes within their communities.

Conclusion

This article underscores the pivotal role of collective and materialised memories in shaping the pursuit of immobility among community members in locations experiencing violent conflicts

like eco-violence. This article asserts that collective memory, shaped through historical experiences and familial narratives, significantly influences contemporary assertions of rights and privileges within rural communities; this, in turn, fuels the quest for immobility, particularly in the Middle Belt region. Additionally, it argues that people's materialised memories of their communal land, landscape, objects, and experiences also influence their quest for immobility. Therefore, immobility becomes a strategic response to preserve ancestral bonds, collective identity, and communal experiences (lifescape), even in the midst of conflict. Collective and materialised memories enable immobility, thus preserving the present and future, informed by the past.

Future studies should explore strategies that community members use to remain in conflict zones without the support of state security agencies. Additionally, such studies could assess whether factors that influence immobility vary in different adversities, such as environmental disasters and armed conflicts.

Acknowledgments

I thank Dr Thomas Stubbs, Dr Janina Beiser-McGrath, Professor Faten Ghosn, Dr Zorzeta Bakaki, and Dr Liam F. Beiser-McGrath for their suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this article. I also extend my thanks to the reviewers for their insightful comments and recommendations and to the editorial staff, including Professor Laura K. Taylor, Dr Annabella Osei-Tutufor, and Zora Nazarei, for their support during the publication process.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Aasman, S., Fickers, A. and Wachelder, J. (eds) (2018) *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Adebayo, K. O. (2022) ““They did not allow me to enter the place I was heading to”: being “stuck-in-place” and transit emplacement in Nigerian migrations to China’, *Mobilities*, 17(6), pp. 885–898. doi: 10.1080/17450101.2022.2057812.
- Adedayo, A. G., Oyun, M. B. and Kadeba, O. (2010) ‘Access of rural women to forest resources and its impact on rural household welfare in North Central Nigeria’, *Forest Policy and Economics*, 12(6), pp. 439–450. doi: 10.1016/j.forpol.2010.04.001.
- Adekunle, O. A. and Adisa, S. R. (2010) ‘An Empirical Phenomenological Psychological Study of Farmer-herdsmen Conflicts in North- Central Nigeria’, *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2(1), pp. 1–27.
- Adhikari, J. (2003) ‘Living on a Tightrope: Adaptive Strategies of Grassroot development Workers in a Maoist-Conflict Area’, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 8(2), pp. 369–383.
- Ahrens, J. (2013) ‘Suspended in Eurocrisis: new immobilities and semi-legal migrations amongst Nigerians living in Spain’, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 22(1), pp. 115–140.
- Aluaigba, M. T. (2011) ‘Exploiting the Tiv Traditional Methods of North-Central Nigeria’, *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 1(2), pp. 74–103. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.1.2.74>.
- Antwi Bosiakoh, T. (2019) ‘Nigerian Immigrants as “Liminars” in Ghana, West Africa: Narratives on Mobility, Immobility and Borderlands’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(4), pp. 554–568. doi: 10.1177/0021909619827036.
- Asiyanbola, R. A. (2010) ‘Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: a Case of Ife-Modakeke in Historical Perspective’, *ASSET: An International Journal*, 5(1), pp. 61–78. Available at: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=dd3a87cea16fbf717147789ffb900cc1cec7c34>.
- Awad, S. H. (2020) ‘Experiencing change: Interrelations between individual and social transformations’, in van Alphen, F. and Normann, S. (eds) *Cultural psychology in communities: tensions and transformations*. Information Age Publishing, pp. 147–158.
- Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Kniveton, D. and Cannon, T. (2020) ‘Trapped in the prison of the mind: Notions of climate-induced (im)mobility decision-making and wellbeing from an urban informal settlement in Bangladesh’, *Palgrave Communications*, 6(1), pp. 1–15. doi: 10.1057/s41599-020-0443-2.
- Bamidele, S. (2018) ‘The settler has nowhere to feed and the indigene has all the pastures: re (visiting) the indigeneity-settler crisis in Nigeria’, *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, 3(1), pp. 49–67. Available at: <https://0-search.ebscohost.com.ujlink.uj.ac.za/login.aspx?direct=true&db=awn&AN=B13884&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Bamidele, S. (2022) ‘A tale of two communities: Who owns the land? community safety, peace process and land ownership in tiv/jukun communities of Taraba State, Nigeria’, *GeoJournal*, 87(3), pp. 1709–1725. doi: 10.1007/s10708-020-10339-5.

- Barcus, H. and Werner, C. (2017) 'Choosing to Stay: (Im)Mobility Decisions Amongst Mongolia's Ethnic Kazakhs', *Globalizations*, 14(1), pp. 32–50. doi: 10.1080/14747731.2016.1161038.
- Bassett, T. (1988) 'The Political Ecology of Peasant-Herder Conflicts in the Northern Ivory Coast', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 78(3), pp. 453–472. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8306.1988.tb00218.x.
- Basu, P. (2002) 'Palimpsest Memoryscapes : Materializing and Mediating War and Peace in Sierra Leone', pp. 231–259.
- Basu, P. (2013) 'Memoryscapes and multi-sited methods', in Keightley, E. and Pickering, M. (ed.) *Research methods for memory studies*. Edinburgh University Press, pp. 115–131.
- Berriane, J. (2020) 'Religion in Spaces of Transit: African Christian Migrant Churches and Transnational Mobility in Morocco', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 41(4), pp. 424–441. doi: 10.1080/07256868.2020.1778653.
- Biehler, N. (2023) *Why People Stay: Decision-making in Situations of Forced Displacement and Options for Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation*. Berlin. doi: 10.18449/2023RP15.
- Blocq, D. S. (2014) 'The grassroots nature of counterinsurgent tribal militia formation: the case of the Fertit in Southern Sudan, 1985–1989', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(4), pp. 710–724. doi: 10.1080/17531055.2014.946336.
- Blondin, S. (2021a) 'Geoforum Staying despite disaster risks : Place attachment , voluntary immobility and adaptation in Tajikistan ' s Pamir Mountains', *Geoforum*, 126, pp. 290–301. doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.08.009.
- Blondin, S. (2021b) 'Staying despite disaster risks: Place attachment, voluntary immobility and adaptation in Tajikistan's Pamir Mountains', *Geoforum*, 126(August), pp. 290–301. doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.08.009.
- Bond, E. and Bond, E. (2022) 'Between Memory and Matter : Italy and the Transnational Dimensions of Public Art Between Memory and Matter : Italy and the Transnational Dimensions of Public Art', *Italian Studies*, 77(4), pp. 367–382. doi: 10.1080/00751634.2022.2115762.
- van Boven, L., Kane, J. and McGraw, A. P. (2009) 'Temporally asymmetric constraints on mental simulation: Retrospection is more constrained than prospection', in Markman, K. D., Klein, W. M., and Suhr, J. A. (eds) *Handbook of imagination and mental simulation*. New York: Psychology Press, pp. 131–149.
- Braithwaite, A., Cox, J. M. and Ghosn, F. (2021) 'Should I stay or should I go? The decision to flee or stay home during civil war', *International Interactions*, 47(2), pp. 221–236. doi: 10.1080/03050629.2021.1835890.
- Braun, V. et al. (2019) 'Thematic Analysis', in Liamputtong, P. (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp. 843–860.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Buchli, V. and Lucas, G. (2001) *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*. New York: Routledge.

- Campbell, K. A. *et al.* (2021) ‘Reflexive thematic analysis for applied qualitative health research’, *Qualitative Report*, 26(6), pp. 2011–2028. doi: 10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5010.
- Casey, E. (2001) ‘Body, Self and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the PlaceWorld’, in Adams, P. C., Hoelscher, S. D., and Till, K. E. (eds) *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press, pp. 403–425.
- Convery, I. *et al.* (2005) ‘Death in the wrong place? Emotional geographies of the UK 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21(1), pp. 99–109. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2004.10.003.
- Corballis, M. C. (2019) ‘Language, memory, and mental time travel: An evolutionary perspective’, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 13(July), pp. 1–9. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2019.00217.
- Dori, D. F., Hagen-zanker, J. and Mazzilli, C. (2024) ‘The Entanglement Between Tangible and Intangible Factors in Shaping Hadiya Migration Aspirations to South Africa’, *International Migration Review*, pp. 1–25. doi: 10.1177/01979183241226635.
- Dorward, D. (1969) ‘The Development of the British Colonial Administration among the Tiv , 1900-1949’, *African Affairs*, 68(273), pp. 316–333. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/720655>.
- Draucker, C. B., Martsof, D. S. and Poole, C. (2009) ‘Developing Distress Protocols for Research on Sensitive Topics’, *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 23(5), pp. 343–350. doi: 10.1016/j.apnu.2008.10.008.
- Dyke, R. M. Van (2019) ‘Archaeology and Social Memory’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 48, pp. 207–225.
- Esparza, D. *et al.* (2020) ‘Movement of the people: Violence and internal displacement’, *International Area Studies Review*, 23(3), pp. 233–250. doi: 10.1177/2233865920925247.
- Gagnepain, P. *et al.* (2020) ‘Collective memory shapes the organization of individual memories in the medial prefrontal cortex’, *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(2), pp. 189–200. doi: 10.1038/s41562-019-0779-z.
- Gamsakhurdia, V. (2019) ‘Proculturation: Self-reconstruction by making “fusion cocktails” of alien and familiar meanings’, *Culture and Psychology*, 25(2), pp. 161–177. doi: 10.1177/1354067X19829020.
- Glassberg, D. (1996) ‘Public history and the study of memory’, *Public Historian*, 18(2), pp. 7–23. doi: 10.2307/3377910.
- Gross-Wyrtzen, L. (2020) ‘Contained and abandoned in the “humane” border: Black migrants’ immobility and survival in Moroccan urban space’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38(5), pp. 887–904. doi: 10.1177/0263775820922243.
- Haugen, H. Ø. (2012) ‘Nigerians in China: A Second State of Immobility’, *International Migration*, 50(2), pp. 65–80. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2435.2011.00713.x.
- Hermann, E. and Kempf, W. (2017) ‘Climate Change and the Imagining of Migration : Emerging Discourses on Kiribati ’ s Land Purchase in Fiji’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 29(2), pp. 231–263.
- Heux, L., Clifford, R. and Souchay, C. (2023) ‘Collective memory and autobiographical

- memory : Perspectives from the humanities and cognitive sciences’, *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 4(3), pp. 1–14. doi: 10.1002/wcs.1635.
- Higazi, A. (2016) ‘Farmer-pastoralist conflicts on the Jos Plateau, central Nigeria: security responses of local vigilantes and the Nigerian state’, *Conflict, Security and Development*, 16(4), pp. 365–385. doi: 10.1080/14678802.2016.1200314.
- Higazi, A. (2022) ‘Boko Haram : the impacts of insurgency on Pastoralists and Farmers’, *Afrique contemporaine*, 2(274), pp. 163–167. doi: 10.3917/afco1.274.0163.
- Hirst, W., Yamashiro, J. K. and Coman, A. (2018) ‘Collective Memory from a Psychological Perspective’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22(5), pp. 438–451. doi: 10.1016/j.tics.2018.02.010.
- Hoffman, D. (2007) ‘The meaning of a militia: Understanding the civil defence forces of Sierra Leone’, *African Affairs*, 106(425), pp. 639–662. doi: 10.1093/afraf/adm054.
- Hopwood, N. (2010) ‘A sociocultural view of doctoral students’ relationships and agency’, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 32(2), pp. 103–117. doi: 10.1080/0158037X.2010.487482.
- Hoven, E. Van Den (2014) ‘A future-proof past : Designing for remembering experiences’, *Memory Studies*, 7(3), pp. 370–384. doi: 10.1177/1750698014530625.
- Hutton, P. H. (1988) ‘Collective Memory and Collective Mentalities : The Halbwachs-Ariés Connection’, *Historical Reflections*, 15(2), pp. 311–322. Available at: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/23232416>.
- Ike, D. N. (1984) ‘The System of Land Rights in Nigerian Agriculture’, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 43(4), pp. 469–480. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3486126>.
- Iranzo, Á. (2021) ‘Sub-Saharan migrants “in transit”: intersections between mobility and immobility and the production of (in)securities’, *Mobilities*. doi: 10.1080/17450101.2021.1935305.
- Ityavkase, A. E. and Gimba, I. I. (2021) ‘The Role of Colonial Policies in the Age-Long Hostilities between the Tiv and Jukun in Present Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria’, *Port Harcourt Journal Of History & Diplomatic Studies*, 8(4), pp. 1–22.
- Jacquemot, P. (2022) ‘La coexistence contrariée entre pasteurs et agriculteurs en Afrique subsaharienne’, *Afrique contemporaine*, N° 274(2), pp. 7–50. doi: 10.3917/afco1.274.0007.
- Jentsch, C. and Masullo, J. (2022) ‘Violent or non-violent action? Wartime civilian resistance in Colombia and Mozambique’, *Political Geography*, 99(October), p. 102761. doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102761.
- Jimoh, A. M. (2016) *Agatu Massacre: Mark laments death of over 500 constituents*, *Guardian Nigeria*. Available at: <https://guardian.ng/news/agatu-massacre-mark-laments-death-of-over-500-constituents/> (Accessed: 9 January 2023).
- Kelman, H. C. (1999) ‘The interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian national identities: The role of the other in existential conflicts (1999)’, *Journal of social Issues*, 55(3), pp. 581–600.
- Khanian, M., Serpoush, B. and Gheitarani, N. (2019) ‘Balance between place attachment and migration based on subjective adaptive capacity in response to climate change : the case of Famenin County in Western Iran’, *Climate and Development ISSN:*, 11(1), pp. 69–82. doi:

10.1080/17565529.2017.1374238.

Kipnis, E., Bebek, G. and Bróckerhoff, A. (2021) ‘Within, in-between, out-of-bounds? Locating researcher positionalities in multicultural marketplaces’, *Journal of Business Research*, 123(October 2020), pp. 401–414. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.09.063.

Kojo, D. *et al.* (2023) ‘Manufacturing Scarcity : Understanding the Causes of Conflicts Between Farmers and Herders in Asante Akim North Municipality of Ghana Manufacturing Scarcity : Understanding the Causes of Conflicts Between Farmers and Herders in Asante Akim North Municipal’, *African Security*, 00(00), pp. 1–23. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2023.2251313.

Kreisslová, S. and Nosková, J. (2019) ““ Family Silver ” or arteFactS (in) memories of Forcibly DiSplaceD GermanS’, *Slovenský národopis*, 67(2), pp. 165–184. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2478/se-2019-0009>.

Kudryavtsev, A., Stedman, R. C. and Krasny, M. E. (2012) ‘Sense of place in environmental education’, *Environmental Education Research*, 18(2), pp. 229–250. doi: 10.1080/13504622.2011.609615.

Lar (2019) ‘Violence and Insecurity in Northwest Nigeria: Exploring the Role and Resilience of Local Actors’, *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 9(2), p. 123. doi: 10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.9.2.07.

Lowenthal, D. (1975) ‘Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory’, *Geographical Review*, 65(1), pp. 1–36.

Lubkemann, S. C. (2008) *Culture in chaos. In Culture in Chaos*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Maiangwa, B. (2017) ““Conflicting Indigeneity” and Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Postcolonial Africa’, *Peace Review*, 29(3), pp. 282–288. doi: 10.1080/10402659.2017.1344527.

Maiangwa, B. (2020) *The crisis of belonging and ethnographies of peacebuilding in Kaduna State, Nigeria*. Lexington Books.

Makar, T. (1994) *The History of Political Change among the Tiv in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Limited.

Mallick, B., Sultana, Z. and Bennett, C. M. (2020) ‘How do sustainable livelihoods influence environmental (non-)migration aspirations?’, *Applied Geography*, 124(September), p. 102328. doi: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2020.102328.

Mang, H. G. and Ehrhardt, D. (2018) ‘Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne The politics of paper : negotiating over and around indigeneship certification in Plateau State , Nigeria’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 52(3), pp. 331–347. doi: 10.1080/00083968.2018.1546602.

Marston, J. F. (2020) ‘Resisting Displacement: Leveraging Interpersonal Ties to Remain despite Criminal Violence in Medellín, Colombia’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(13), pp. 1995–2028. doi: 10.1177/0010414020912276.

Masullo, J. (2021) ‘Refusing to cooperate with armed groups civilian agency and civilian noncooperation in armed conflicts’, *International Studies Review*, 23(3), pp. 887–913. doi: 10.1093/isr/viaa090.

- Mata-Codesal, D. (2015) ‘Ways of Staying Put in Ecuador: Social and Embodied Experiences of Mobility–Immobility Interactions’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(14), pp. 2274–2290. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2015.1053850.
- Maxted, J. (2003) ‘Youth and war in Sierra Leone’, *African Identities*, 1(1), pp. 69–78. doi: 10.1080/1472584032000127888.
- Mayah, E. (2016) *SPECIAL REPORT: Inside Agatu killing field: blood on the streets, charred bodies everywhere*, *Premium Times Nigeriatimes*. Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/200369-special-report-inside-agatu-killing-field-blood-on-the-streets-charred-bodies-everywhere.html> (Accessed: 9 January 2023).
- Mckinnon, S. *et al.* (2016) “‘ The greatest loss was a loss of our history ’: natural disasters , marginalised identities and sites of memory’, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17(8), pp. 1120–1139. doi: 10.1080/14649365.2016.1153137.
- McMichael, C. *et al.* (2021a) ‘Rising seas, immobilities, and translocality in small island states: case studies from Fiji and Tuvalu’, *Population and Environment*, 43(1), pp. 82–107. doi: 10.1007/s11111-021-00378-6.
- McMichael, C. *et al.* (2021b) ‘Rising seas, immobilities, and translocality in small island states: case studies from Fiji and Tuvalu’, *Population and Environment*, 43(1), pp. 82–107. doi: 10.1007/s11111-021-00378-6.
- Michaelian, K., Perrin, D. and Sant’Anna, A. (2020) ‘Continuities and Discontinuities Between Imagination and Memory: The View from Philosophy’, in Abraham, A. (ed.) *The Cambridge handbook of the Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Misztal, B. A. (2010) ‘Collective memory in a global age: Learning how and what to remember’, *Current Sociology*, 58(1), pp. 24–44. doi: 10.1177/0011392109348544.
- de Montclos (2020) ‘The Nigerian Military Response to Boko Haram: A Critical Analysis’, *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 10(2), p. 65. doi: 10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.10.2.04.
- Nawrotzki, R. J. and DeWaard, J. (2018) ‘Putting trapped populations into place: climate change and inter-district migration flows in Zambia’, *Regional Environmental Change*, 18(2), pp. 533–546. doi: 10.1007/s10113-017-1224-3.
- Njoku, U. J. (2005) ‘Colonial Political Re-Engineering and the Genesis of Modern Corruption in African Public Service : The Issue of the Warrant Chiefs of South Eastern Nigeria 1 as a Case in Point’, *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 14(1), pp. 99–116.
- Nwankwo, C. F. (2020) ‘Essentialising critical geopolitics of the farmers – pastoralists conflicts in West Africa’, *GeoJournal*, 85, pp. 1291–1308. doi: 10.1007/s10708-019-10023-3.
- Nwankwo, C. F. (2023) ‘The Moral Economy of the Agatu “Massacre”: Reterritorializing Farmer-Herder Relations’, *Society*, 60(3), pp. 359–371. doi: 10.1007/s12115-023-00860-x.
- Nwankwo, C. F. (2024) ‘Assemblage thinking and actor – network theory : Reconciling the perspectives of environmental security and political ecology for improving the understanding of farmer – herder con fl icts in Africa’, *Progress in Environmental Geography*, 0(0), pp. 1–22. doi: 10.1177/27539687241236803.

- Obradović, S. (2016) 'Don't forget to remember: Collective memory of the Yugoslav wars in present-day Serbia', *Peace and Conflict*, 22(1), pp. 12–18. doi: 10.1037/pac0000144.
- Ochonu, M. E. (2008) 'Colonialism within colonialism: The Hausa-Caliphate imaginary and the British colonial administration of the Nigerian middle belt', *African Studies Quarterly*, 10(2–3), pp. 95–127.
- Ochonu, M. E. (2014) *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa imperial agents and Middle Belt consciousness in Nigeria*. Indiana: Indiana University.
- Ogbozor, E. (2016) *Resilience to violent extremism: the rural livelihood coping strategies in the Lake Chad basin*, *Households in Conflict Network Working Paper*.
- Ogu, J. M. (2020) 'Eco-Violence: A Threat to Global Health', *Ethics in Biology, Engineering and Medicine: An International Journal*, 11(1), pp. 41–53. doi: 10.1615/EthicsBiologyEngMed.2021037631.
- Ojo, J. S. (2023) 'Climate-related armed conflict and communities' resistance to Rural Grazing Area settlement policy in Nigeria's Middlebelt', *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, pp. 1–21. doi: 10.1002/crq.21390.
- Olojo, A. (2020) 'Making sense of resilience in the Boko Haram crisis', (June). Available at: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/war-30.pdf>.
- Olumba, E. E. *et al.* (2022) 'Conceptualising eco-violence: moving beyond the multiple labelling of water and agricultural resource conflicts in the Sahel', *Third World Quarterly*, 43(9), pp. 2075–2090. doi: 10.1080/01436597.2022.2083601.
- Olumba, E. E. (2023) 'Anchored in History: Understanding the persistence of Eco-violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt through Collective Memory.', *Genealogy*, 7(3), pp. 1–18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy7030045>.
- Olumba, E. E. (2024) 'The Politics of Eco-Violence: Why Is Conflict Escalating in Nigeria's Middle Belt?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 36(2), pp. 180–197. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2129015>.
- Onwuzuruigbo, I. (2013) "'Even if we Meet in Heaven We Will Fight": British Colonial Policies and Aguleri/Umuleri Conflicts in Southeastern Nigeria', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 48(2), pp. 129–144. doi: 10.1177/0021909612442134.
- Orkar, J. N. (1979) *A precolonial history of the Tiv of central Nigeria, c.1500-1850*. Dalhousie University. Available at: <https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/55945/NK44311.pdf?sequence=1>.
- Saad, D. (2019) 'Materializing Palestinian Memory : Objects of Home and the Everyday Eternities of Exile', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 80, pp. 57–71.
- De Saint-Laurent, C. (2014) "'I would rather be hanged than agree with you!": Collective Memory and the Definition of the Nation in Parliamentary Debates on Immigration', *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, 15(3), pp. 22–53. doi: 10.7146/ocps.v15i3.19860.
- de Saint-Laurent, C. and Obradović, S. (2019) 'Uses of the Past: History as a Resource for the Present', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 53(1), pp. 1–13. doi: 10.1007/s12124-018-9463-5.
- Santos, C. and Mourato, J. M. (2022) "'I was born here , I will die here ": climate change

and migration decisions from coastal and insular’, *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, pp. 1–18. doi: 10.1080/04353684.2022.2154689.

Sayne, A. (2011) *Adaptation and Conflict*. Washington D.C. Available at: www.usip.org.

Schewel, K. (2020) ‘Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies’, *International Migration Review*, 54(2), pp. 328–355. doi: 10.1177/0197918319831952.

Scott, S. (2019) *The social life of nothing: Silence, invisibility and emptiness in tales of lost experience*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Seaton, E. (2008) ‘Common knowledge: Reflections on narratives in community’, *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), pp. 293–305. doi: 10.1177/1468794106094078.

Sesma, E. (2022) ‘Materializing Memory and Building Community : Contemporary Landscape Archaeology of a Nineteenth-Century Bahamian Plantation A Case for Contemporary Archaeological’, *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, 33(1), pp. 24–41. doi: 10.1111/apaa.12155.

Shehu, M. and Abba, A. (2020) ‘Humanitarian crisis and sustainable development: perspectives and preferences of internally displaced persons in the northeastern Nigeria’, *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 5(1). doi: 10.1186/s41018-020-00084-2.

Sirkeci, I. and Cohen, J. H. (2016) ‘Cultures of Migration and Conflict in Contemporary Human Mobility in Turkey’, *European Review*, 24(3), pp. 381–396. doi: 10.1017/S1062798716000119.

Suddendorf, T., Addis, D. R. and Corballis, M. C. (2009) ‘Mental time travel and the shaping of the human mind’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 364(1521), pp. 1317–1324. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2008.0301.

Suddendorf, T. and Corballis, M. C. (2007) ‘The evolution of foresight’, *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 30(3), pp. 299–313. Available at: papers2://publication/uuid/3EAFCD6E-36A5-4DC3-BE57-E810DF1B4FF1.

Szpunar, K. and McDermott, K. B. (2009) ‘Episodic future thought: Remembering the past to imagine the future’, in Markman, K. D., Klein, W. M., and Suhr, J. A. (eds) *Handbook of imagination and mental simulation*. New York: Psychology Press, pp. 119–129.

Townsend, L. (2021) ‘The epistemology of collective testimony’, *Journal of Social Ontology*, 6(2), pp. 187–210. doi: 10.1515/jso-2019-0044.

Uchendu, V. C. (1979) ‘State, land, and society in Nigeria: A critical assessment of land use decree (1978)’, *Journal of African Studies*, 6(2), p. 62. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/state-land-society-nigeria-critical-assessment/docview/1303254026/se-2>.

Umejesi, I. (2015) ‘Collective memory, coloniality and resource ownership questions: the conflict of identities in postcolonial Nigeria’, *Africa Review*, 7(1), pp. 42–54. doi: 10.1080/09744053.2014.977595.

Upadhyay, H. *et al.* (2023) “ We are still here ” climate change , gender and immobility in highly mobile Himalayan communities “ We are still here ” climate change , gender and immobility in highly mobile’, *Climate and Development*, pp. 1–15. doi: 10.1080/17565529.2023.2230176.

- Uwazuruike, C. (2020) ‘Bloodbath, Invasion, Massacre’: Idoma Voice and the Framing of the Farmer-Herder Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria’, in Matthews, J. and Thorsen, E. (eds) *Media, Journalism and Disaster Communities*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 131–145. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33712-4_9.
- Valsiner, J. (2014) ‘Needed for cultural psychology: Methodology in a new key’, *Culture and Psychology*, 20(1), pp. 3–30. doi: 10.1177/1354067X13515941.
- Veale, A. and Andres, C. (2014) “‘I wish, I wish...’: mobility, immobility and the global “imaginings” of Nigerian transnational children’, in Veale, A. and Dona, G. (eds) *Child & Youth Migration: Mobility-in Migration in an Era of Globalization*,. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 140–162.
- Villamil, F. (2021) ‘Mobilizing memories: The social conditions of the long-term impact of victimization’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(3), pp. 399–416. doi: 10.1177/0022343320912816.
- Werner, C. and Barcus, H. R. (2009) ‘Mobility and Immobility in a Transnational Context : Changing Views of Migration among the Kazakh Diaspora in Mongolia’, *Migration Letters*, 6(1), pp. 49–62.
- Williams, C. and Smith, A. D. (1983) ‘The national construction of social space. Progress in human geography’, *Progress in human geography*, 7(4), pp. 502–518.
- Winchester, D. and Green, K. D. (2019) ‘Talking Your Self into It: How and When Accounts Shape Motivation for Action’, *Sociological Theory*, 37(3), pp. 257–281. doi: 10.1177/0735275119869959.
- Yates, O. E. T. *et al.* (2022) ‘Reshaping ties to land : a systematic review of the psychosocial and cultural impacts of Pacific climate-related mobility of Pacific climate-related mobility’, *Climate and Development*, 14(3), pp. 250–267. doi: 10.1080/17565529.2021.1911775.
- Yee, M. *et al.* (2022) ‘Climate Change, Voluntary Immobility, and Place-Belongingness: Insights from Togoru, Fiji’, *Climate*, 10(44), p. 1020.
- Yikwab, P. Y. and Tade, O. (2021) ‘How Farming Communities Cope With Displacement Arising from Farmer-Herder Conflict in North Central Nigeria’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, p. 002190962110348. doi: 10.1177/00219096211034882.