Introduction

"We'll go to the desert there, up that way. Where else can we go?" asks Halima, an elderly woman from the village al-Huqna along the Nile. We are watching as the waters of the Nile creep toward her house, each hour a little closer. No one had thought this could happen; during the last few days, some of the villagers even went on journeys. Nafisa, for instance, wasn't there when it started. Her husband Hissain had accompanied her to a doctor's appointment in the capital Khartoum. A relative had urged him to stay: she was anxious, for at that point the waters had already reached the edge of the village. Hissain reassured her that he would be back before anything could happen. He hadn't wanted to believe it. Many people didn't believe it. But the unthinkable happened: When Nafisa and Hissain return home exactly a week later, they have to ask around until they are finally able to locate their family and the other villagers on a rocky cliff some distance beyond the village. Dumbfounded, they ask their people what, God have mercy on them, they are doing there. From the hill, Hissain looks out over the fields, now submerged beneath the river. The large *sâqiya*, his grandfather's life work, is under water; only the tips of the date palms still stick out above the waves. The village itself has all but vanished: a few scattered ruins, the river rippling around them. The situation seems unreal and alien to Hissain, his homeland changed beyond all recognition.

I couldn't believe what was happening either. In July 2008, when the first of the neighboring villages sank beneath the waters of the Nile, I told myself that it would be a long time before the Nile was likely to reach Nafisa's village or her home, where I was staying. Like many others, I saw the signs of the coming flood, but I couldn't truly grasp what it meant. It is one thing to take note of individual facts—this village or that one is under water—but really understanding it is something that exceeds our capacity for comprehension, and we are scarcely able to process this unbelievable reality. It is something sensed rather than known—a creeping uncanny threat. The preceding weeks had been ones of continually growing tension. The daily conversations in the villages were dominated by the behavior of the river, by the question whether the rising waters could be attributed to the annual flooding that began during

this time of year, or whether the hydroelectric dam being built some 50 kilometers downstream had in fact closed its gates. There was no reliable information available. The fear and anxiety could also be seen in Hissain's eyes as he explained to me, shortly before his departure for Khartoum, that he could not conceive of his house no longer being there. In a shelter of palm fronds on the cliff it would be hot and monotonous because there was no more work, Hissain expected. "You stare at the ceiling and wait. And what are the animals to eat?" he asked worriedly. The sheep and goats, the date palms and the fields are his work, his livelihood, and his entire wealth.

The question "Where can we go; where will we live?" has preoccupied Hissain, Nafisa, Halima, and the other villagers for several years. When concrete plans for the Hamdab Dam at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile River in northern Sudan began to take shape in the late 1990s, discussions about a suitable place to live in the future became ever more relevant for the communities in the area that would be flooded by the reservoir. The Hamdab Dam—officially known today as the Merowe Dam—is the largest and most complex sociotechnical infrastructure project in the Sudan since the country's independence in 1956. As part of a comprehensive state plan for developing the Nile River valley, this hydroelectric plant with a capacity of 1250 megawatts (an output roughly equal to that of a nuclear reactor) is supposed to spur on socioeconomic growth in the Sudan.[1] After the start of oil exports promised to stabilize the Sudanese economy in 1999, financial supporters from China and the Gulf countries came on board, and construction of the dam began in 2003.

Such large-scale infrastructure projects mobilize immense quantities of capital, material, and power—both that of states and of international corporations—for the implementation of a grand modernizing vision and the radical disruption of the physical landscape that go along with this; they typically also involve a massive relocation of the population. In the case of the Hamdab Dam, some 70,000 people from three different ethnic groups were forced to abandon their homes, their property, and their homeland. Just like in many other dam-building projects around the world, those affected were mostly peasants living in sparsely populated, marginalized areas in the periphery of a postcolonial nation-state.

Nafisa and Hissain belong to the Manasir, a community of some 50,000 individuals, and like most of the peasants in the region, they were highly dubious about relocation to a far-distant settlement site managed by the state. It would mean far more than just a change of physical location: it meant giving up the world that embraced the whole of their lives in exchange for new, uncertain lives in a large-scale agricultural project. *Where* they were to live was above all a question of *how* they would live, of the possibilities and prospects for a life felt to be acceptable and good. In the last weeks before the submersion of her village, I wandered with Nafisa through the palm groves along the banks

of the Nile. She described all the things she used the palms for, apart from the sale of the dates as a cash crop. The wood was used for building their houses, and the women wove the palm fronds into baskets, prayer mats, and other items. "Why should we simply give all that up without any compensation and move to some place in the desert?" she asked me. She was referring to al-Mukabrab, the official resettlement site located some 30 kilometers from the Nile in the region around Ad-Damir, the capital of Wilaya Nahr an-Nil, the River Nile State. The distance between the resettlement site and Nafisa's home village is about 200 kilometers. Nafisa was not opposed to relocating per se. But she was still waiting for the property census that had been promised and for the completion of local settlements that were to be built along the banks of the future reservoir. These settlements were part of an agreement that local political representatives of the Manasir had managed to secure from the central government in 2006 and again in 2007.

In the course of the political negotiations with the dam authority and the government, a portion of the peasantry, including Nafisa, had placed their hopes on an alternative to the state resettlement sites—namely, the vision of being able to continue living and working in their homeland, along the edges of the reservoir, in the local settlements they had fought for and that were known as the "local option." These hopes and the prospects for the future seemed on the verge of being dashed in that summer of 2008. By this time, some of her relatives were already living in the official resettlement sites; others were following as a result of destruction caused by the flooding. But Nafisa stayed. Given that her entire means of existence had fallen apart, I asked Nafisa whether it might not in fact be better to move to the new settlement provided by the state. She responded, as she had many times over the past weeks, "We are not going to al-Mukabrab. We are staying." Further inland, on the cliffs in the desert bordering the fertile riverine plain, the villagers had begun to construct improvised shelters for their families out of wood and palm fronds to protect against the heat of the sun. Alongside they piled up what household items they had been able to rescue.

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." This verse from William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" serves as the epigraph and title for Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel in which he describes the effects of the arrival of British missionaries and the imposition of colonial rule on Igbo communities in present-day Nigeria (Achebe 1958). In the villages along the Nile, too, a social community is shattered by the dam construction and the subsequent struggles to decide how life would look in the future and to find a new, shared homeland. The center of this lifeworld, in which the villagers' daily lives, work, and community take place—namely irrigation farming along the banks of the Nile—has all but disappeared beneath the waters of the reservoir. How might it be possible to stay and carry on with life under such circumstances? Where

is one to go, and how is one to live? How is it possible to find answers to these questions in a situation of such existential uncertainty and radical change?

The questions that the peasants found themselves asking are essentially also my research questions. They emerge out of a phenomenologically oriented approach to research that relies on directly witnessed and shared experience rather than reconstruction of events according to narrative accounts. This distinguishes my research from studies that were conducted after the fact and discursively reconstruct life-changing events. My study is a paradigmatic analysis of expulsion from worlds of meaning and not just from a physical place; it thus contributes to research on resettlement, but beyond that, it is concerned with the broader topics of uncertainty and crises in contexts of war, poverty, various forms of forced displacement, and environmental disasters. This empirical basis enables me to show that the central concern is not—as is usually highlighted in discussions of such situations—on coping mechanisms, calculated strategies, and survival tactics, but above all creating meaning through everyday practice and testing possibilities for realizing meaningful ways of living.

Most studies of migration and displacement follow the prevailing social science paradigm of mobility. Instead of adopting these premises uncritically, I ask about the processes of staying. What happens to those who do not leave but choose to remain in their homeland? What tensions arise between staying and going? My research thus also differs from other studies of dam construction projects, which have focused on the people who are resettled. I examine the attempt to stay—a process the majority of the Manasir chose to follow and that began long before the Nile began to rise. How does a vision of staying come to be, and how is it made a reality? In connection with the dam construction, I describe the political processes within which ideas about (re)settlement emerged and were contested. Drawing on perspectives from the anthropology of technology, I argue that the implementation of infrastructure is largely shaped by political processes and not in fact planned and carried out purely according to a technical-rational logic. Rather, it is characterized by processes and events that are open, uncertain, and unforeseeable. In the confrontation with the limited scope for negotiation and the politics of uncertainty of the Islamist military regime, a local movement arose in which peasants developed their own visions for the future and thereby rejected the "better life" that the state promised to offer in its resettlement sites (chapters 1 and 2).

Building on phenomenological, epistemological, and praxeological approaches, in the main part of this book, I analyze the efforts, practices, and discourses that constitute the attempt to live a meaningful life—or create such a life—in a world that is falling apart (chapters 3 through 6). Thus, this is an anthropological study examining the shaping and transformation of lives and places in a situation experienced as a crisis. While it is common to focus on tactical maneuvering and calculation in such contexts of uncertainty and to

assume that such severe crises produce complete ruptures, I argue for a processual approach. I propose that cultural practices, routines, and embodied experiences undergo gradual and unexpected transformations as a result of processes of exploration, improvisation, and experimentation. New cultural forms and practices gradually emerge through continuing to carry on small actions of everyday life, thus opening up new potential for a future. This is not so much a normalization of crisis as it is an emergence of new realities. Rather than dividing events into "before" and "after" the crisis, or into causes and effects, I take a processual perspective. My ethnography aims at capturing the ways of life that people try out as they strive to reclaim spaces to live.

The book looks at dam-induced displacement and its problems; it also sheds some light on the political economy of the Sudan. However, my main interest is in the worlds that fall apart and in the processes of reconfiguring them. Thus, my study addresses one of the central questions that drives the social sciences: namely, how social realities are experienced, ordered, and produced.

My analysis is based on long-term research—specifically, on twelve months of continuous field research (2008–9) in northern Sudan in various parts of the territory of the Manasir as well as several weeks in the state resettlement sites. A number of shorter stays also took place with Manasir families in Khartoum, Ad-Damir, and London. I also draw on follow-up field research in November 2010 and prior exploratory research in 2006, 2007, and 2008, which initially was conducted as part of an ethnographic documentary film project about the impending resettlement. The roots of this book can also be traced to the research by anthropologist Kurt Beck and his former doctoral student Abdelrahim Mohammed Salih on peasant labor, irrigation agriculture, and land rights in the region. As a continuation of this work, my book can be seen as part of a long-term study that started in the early 1990s and will only be concluded in two or three generations when the trauma of displacement has receded into the collective memory of the Manasir. In a closing note, I provide a brief sketch of the current situation, which I have followed over the years through communication by telephone and email and in-person research visits in 2015 and 2018.

Infrastructure Megaprojects, Dams, and Displacement

The government plans for expanding the energy and water infrastructure of the Sudan, which include the construction of additional dams that will cause additional displacements, are a reflection of transformation processes currently happening across Africa. These include transnational investments in resource extraction and other forms of capital accumulation through massive land seizures, and in particular—spurred on by an economic boom starting in the year 2000—the expansion of infrastructure for energy generation, tele-

communication, water management, and transportation. The technology being relied upon as the basis for economic growth, industrialization, and electrification is hydropower.

After early projects in the 1950s through the 1970s such as the Kariba Dam (1958, Zambia/Zimbabwe), Akosombo Dam (1966, Ghana), Aswan High Dam (1971, Egypt), and Cahora Bassa Dam (1975, Mozambique), Africa has seen a renewed boom in large dams since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Besides the Hamdab Dam, these include, for example, projects in Ethiopia (Gilgel-Gibe III Dam: 1870 MW; Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: 5250 MW) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with its planned Grand Inga (40,000 MW). In light of global climate change, the hydropower industry and political elites promote such projects with promises of sustainable, inexpensive generation of "green electricity" and the prospects of a "green revolution" in agriculture.

After the height of the dam-building boom at the end of the 1970s, the number of new dams sank again substantially, reaching its lowest ebb in the 1990s.[2] This worldwide decrease can be attributed to growing resistance from anti-dam protests and to the problems that large dams brought with them—leading the World Bank to stop providing funding for large dam projects in the 1990s. Interest grew again after the signing of the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and, since 2000, international investments in dam projects have begun to increase once more, particularly in the Global South. These new large dams are justified as being a means to reduce poverty, increase food security, and reduce the effects of climate change (Richter et al. 2010: 15–16). In addition to the World Bank (the traditional sponsor of such projects), China has established itself over the last decade as one of the largest investors and exporters of hydropower plants to Africa and beyond (McDonald, Bosshard, and Brewer 2009).

While the first dams built for hydroelectric production were primarily meant to provide the domestic colonial industries in Africa with power, since the 1980s there has been an increasing trend to see electricity not merely as an essential part of the infrastructure of industrial and urban economies but as a commodity that can be exported regionally and (inter)continentally along "electricity highways"—as, for example, in the plans for the Grand Inga Dam project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Showers 2011a: 1669; 2011b). Water, transformed into electricity, thus becomes a transnational commodity. In the Sudan, too, the government boasted that it would be able to sell electricity from the planned Hamdab/Merowe Dam to its neighbors, although it was expected that Ethiopia would eventually overtake Sudan as a major regional electricity exporter in the Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP, created in 2005) and would even begin to supply the Sudan with electricity.[3]

The dam-building boom in the Sudan is connected with state acquisition of land for large-scale irrigation projects with the purpose of attracting national

and foreign agricultural investments; this can also be observed in other countries such as Ethiopia (see Abbink 2012: 127; Turton 2012). Just as in earlier large-scale projects in the Sudan, for example in the regions of Gezira and Gedaref, these acquisitions involve the expropriation and displacement of nomads and peasants from the lands they rely on for their livelihoods (see Abdelkarim 1992: 22). There is a general trend for the African governments and international investors to justify this new wave of land appropriations in the name of the common good and the development of rural peripheries, which are portrayed as marginal, unused, underdeveloped wasteland (see Geisler 2012). Thus, the emerging infrastructures in the Sudan do not just link and enable the flow of resources; they also create exclusion and unequal distribution of profits and opportunities, thus severing relationships and fueling conflicts in national spaces that are already highly contested and fragmented.

Social science research on the various forms of displacement (e.g., due to political developments, environmental processes, or infrastructure projects) captured by the term "forced migration" largely work within the framework of a humanitarian paradigm and take an applied approach. As a subcategory within the field of forced migration studies, studies of displacement due to dam construction projects are subsumed within the category "development-induced displacement and resettlement." They take for granted that the projects include the relocation of the displaced persons in suitable settlements that have been arranged for them. Unlike internally displaced persons, who generally find themselves outside the protection of their own government, these "forced resettlers," according to this view, are individuals whose expropriation took place in accordance with legal mechanisms, with the government taking responsibility for ensuring their continued well-being and arranging their relocation and compensation—at least theoretically. David Turton for instance suggests that, unlike those displaced by civil wars, forced resettlers would not find themselves in a "refugee-like situation," (Turton 2006: 27–30). Consequently, they do not attract the concern of the international community. As my research shows, however, this categorization limits the ways that development-induced displacement is perceived, favoring certain perspectives, with the result that injustices and phenomena that deviate from this ideal remain hidden and overlooked (see Bakewell 2008).

How should we understand and describe a situation in which people resist forced resettlement or in which they develop alternative visions but are subsequently expelled from their homes by a flood that others have caused? In the search for a suitable research approach, I first briefly summarize the established perspectives and basic assumptions of the extant literature on resettlement. Following this discussion, I argue for adopting a different perspective. This, in turn, calls for applying certain approaches that I consider particularly useful for capturing the dynamics of displacement and the attempt to stay.

Thus, the following two subsections provide an introduction to my conceptual framework, synthesizing the experiences and insights of the research process and my critical reflection on it.

Building Dams, Governing Displacement: A Social Technology

On the whole, the research literature does not challenge dam construction and resettlement in principle, but rather concentrates on analyzing the resettlement processes and improving them by deriving appropriate policy guidelines. This branch of research has its beginnings in Africa in the 1950s. In the context of the construction of the Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River, anthropologists Thayer Scudder and Elizabeth Colson developed the first comprehensive model of resettlement. Using an actor-centered perspective, it conceptualizes the resettlement process as consisting of successive stages (Scudder and Colson 1982; see also Chambers 1969, 1970; Colson 1971). A more widely known model that has heavily influenced both research and political practice was presented in the early 1990s by the World Bank and sociologist Michael Cernea. This model focuses on "impoverishment risks and reconstruction," identifying economic and social factors that could result in poverty in resettled communities—for example, landlessness, joblessness, and marginalization—which are to be minimized through measures such as compensation in land and housing, reemployment, and the creation of new sources of income (Cernea 2000). The guidelines laid out in this work (along with pressure from the World Bank) have resulted in a number of governments reforming their resettlement programs; for example, the People's Republic of China has adopted a strategy of "resettlement with development" (Croll 1999: 469). The goal of this model, which has undergone continuous adaptation, empirical assessment, and combination with other models, is to diagnose problems, make predictions, and work to counter risks in order to carry out successful resettlements that result in a substantial improvement in the standard of living of the resettled people (Cernea 2000; Cernea and Mathur 2008; McDowell 2002).

This approach can be described as a process of "rendering technical," to use anthropologist Tania M. Li's formulation (2007a: 265). It takes the complex and chaotic realities of the planning data and picks out those problems for which there are concrete remedies that can transform problems into positive results. In an insightful analysis, Ranjit Dwivedi characterizes this approach fittingly as a "reformist-managerial" strategy that aims to effectively manage displacement using a planning perspective (Dwivedi 2002: 712). He concludes: "The tendency is to normalize displacement as a consequence of development that has happened in the past and will happen in the future" (Dwivedi 2002: 712). Thus, the standardized, context-independent model serves as an instrument for planners. This, I argue, renders resettlement an established social technology

for governing the displacement of those whose presence stands in the way of a modernizing project by making it plannable and implementable in a controlled fashion. The normalization of this technology of displacement and the continuous striving to optimize it results in a complete depoliticization of resettlement processes—a state of affairs that James Ferguson (1994), referring to development projects more generally, has described as an "anti-politics machine."

In the specific case at hand, the technology of displacement includes an ensemble of administrative practices for governing the resettlement: the evaluation of property and classification of persons eligible for compensation; various administrative procedures for legalizing new ownership structures; and the surveying and spatial design of the new housing complexes. This quantification, regulation, and objectification is experienced by those affected as an economization and devaluation of their cultural worlds of meaning. Talking about the resettlement, a Manasir representative explained that: "we think that it should not be calculated just in terms of profit and loss. There are things which cannot be calculated by figures, but to the people, they feel it" (Hänsch 2006a: 15:57).

As a social technology, resettlement shares certain characteristics common to all large-scale infrastructure projects. In terms of the political economy, "megaprojects" like the Hamdab Dam are subject to ideologies of modernization, which make displacement appear necessary in the name of progress and the common good, thus justifying and rationalizing it (Gellert and Lynch 2003). In this context, forced displacement, as seen above, is based on the optimistic belief that negative consequences for the affected persons can be avoided by adopting suitable procedures. This view is supported by the "transnational epistemic communities" of actors who shape these megaprojects in practice (Gellert and Lynch 2003: 16–20). The knowledge generated and shared by these hierarchically networked communities—consisting of planning experts, engineers, social scientists, international finance institutions, NGOs, construction companies, and government actors—create norms, rules, and procedures based on the belief in progress and control over humans and nature by means of planning, technology, and science. "Taken together, these elements of mega-project ideology interpret the real and ontological separation of 'man' from 'nature' as progressive evolution" (Gellert and Lynch 2003: 20). Humans are seen as separate from their environment; and just as stones and earth can be moved, people and their worlds—as recorded and fixed in census forms, tables, and charts—can be transferred to another location. Due to this technicized planning logic, dynamic social-environmental processes and "deviant" attitudes and elements either escape notice from the beginning or are seen as unexpected consequences and subjected to rehabilitation or correction, which has the purpose of improvement as well as renormalization, thus also helping dominant ideologies and those who represent them to maintain their position of power.[4]

But material elements, especially those like water—a fluid substance and a life-giving resource—are inseparably bound up with society in their varied usages and cultural meanings (see Hahn 2012; Strang 2004). Looking at the political ecology of water, geographer Erik Swyngedouw writes about "hydro-social configurations," which are created by the historical processes of the social organization of water and transcend the modern dichotomy of nature and culture (Swyngedouw 2009: 59). Modifications of hydrological regimes through dam projects may provide some with electricity, but for inhabitants of the Nile valley whose lives are closely woven with the river, these projects mean radical transformations. The control and social organization of water is thus not just a technological challenge; it is also—as Karl Wittfogel (1957) demonstrated in his groundbreaking study on the "hydraulic society"—permeated with power processes.

James Scott, one of the most prominent critics of the ideology of techno-scientific manageability of social and ecological processes, sees this as a feature of "high modernism" and argues that the planning and implementation of large-scale state projects often fail because complex social worlds elude attempts to shape them through operationalization, calculation, and abstraction into simplified models (Scott 1998: 88). The conditions, values, practices, knowledge, and informal processes specific to a particular place are not given due consideration in this "hegemonic planning mentality" and the technocratic implementation it pursues (Scott 1998: 6). A global analysis of large dam projects conducted by the World Commission on Dams (WCD), an independent body representing various stakeholders and groups, offers similar interpretations and conclusions. While some of the dams it assesses achieved their technological and economic objectives, in most cases resettlement projects failed, leaving the affected people in poverty (World Commission on Dams 2000: 37–133).

In the search for explanations for why resettlement has continued to be highly problematic even after four decades of research and the establishment of guidelines and models starting in the 1980s, some researchers have recently begun to question the conventional planning paradigms and particularly the mechanistic approach to controlling risk (de Wet 2006; Koenig 2006). Chris de Wet argues for an "inherent complexities approach" to resettlement characterized by more flexible and open-ended planning that is able to respond to unforeseen developments (de Wet 2006: 182).

Resettlement must not to be considered in isolation, however, but rather within an infrastructure regime. Studies of large sociotechnical systems such as infrastructure illustrate how the implementation of such systems is subject to continual change and shaped by diverse processes rather than conforming to a strict plan, as connections are formed between technology and diverse actors, practices, heterogeneous elements, rules, and values (Ureta 2014: 369;

see also Wynne 1988). In addition, decisions are based not so much on scientific, rational criteria as they are determined by political interests and power processes.[5]

Power is not limited to that of the state, but plays out at a variety of levels and among different actors—for example, international corporations, national administrations, experts, NGOs, local politicians—and within communities, as Tania M. Li argues in her critique of Scott's dichotomies of state/society and domination/resistance (Li 2005: 384). Local knowledge and practices may play a role in the planning and implementation of large-scale state projects, as Li (2005) notes—albeit only to a very limited degree, or, as my study shows, at a very high price, at least in an authoritarian state like the Sudan. The Hamdab Dam is of immense importance for the national interest. The state's attempt to bring local actors in line with the state's vision of development and resettlement is thus marked by little willingness to compromise. Nonconforming and deviating interests are pushed aside and responded to with the use of force. Sudanese civil society organizations have little room for action under the repressive government, and there has been very little concern with the Hamdab Dam. Added to this are the transnational dam construction companies and funding institutions from China and the Gulf, who are pursuing purely economic interests in the context of neoliberal capitalism; international guidelines for resettlement (World Bank 2004, 2017; World Commission on Dams 2000) are not adhered to. But precisely because basic questions of livelihoods and opportunities are at stake, the process is marked by power struggles and can only be accurately described as "technological" if technology is recognized as being fundamentally political.

A Change of Perspective: Dynamic Processes and Attempts to Stay

As the above discussion illustrates, social science studies of such projects have—with the exception of a few that critique developmentalism (see Dwivedi 2002)—largely produced technical knowledge from a perspective that focuses on the issue of resettlement, its effects, and ways to optimize it; in so doing, the dynamics and the contingencies of the unfolding events connected with the whole infrastructure regime have inevitably been neglected. In particular, attempts to stay instead of resettling have been overlooked, or rather, excluded from consideration, and thus rendered invisible. Although the analysis of resistance to resettlement in the context of dam projects has recently begun to receive more attention, there are as yet—at least as far as my survey of the literature was able to uncover—no studies about those actors who ultimately do not resettle.[6]

What happens to those who must leave their homes to make way for the dam or its reservoir, but for various reasons do not wish to or are not able

to move to the resettlement sites arranged by the state? Glimpses into some of these stories can be seen in the documentary film *Drowned Out* (2004) in which Franny Armstrong accompanies several families from the area flooded by the Indian Sardar Sarovar Dam as they restart their lives in urban slums or attempt to stay in their homeland. Similarly, after the construction of the first Aswan Dam (1902) and its heightenings in 1912 and 1933, it is known that a number of Nubian groups continued their lives further on the shores of the reservoir, although the government had offered to resettle them near Aswan in Kom Ombo (Dafalla 1975: 69, 297; Fernea and Kennedy 1966: 349). Similarly, cursory notes indicate that after the construction of the Jebel Aulia Dam on the White Nile, a small group rebuilt their homes in the sand dunes above their flooded village rather than moving to the planned settlements in the surrounding region (Ahmed Mohamed 1980: 117; Dafalla 1975: 297).

One of the most striking examples, however, is the rebuilding of the Sudanese city Wadi Halfa after it was submerged by the floodwaters of the gigantic Aswan High Dam in the mid-1960s. The resettlement of some 120,000 Nubians is among the best-studied cases of dam-related displacement. Some anthropologists focus on the relocation of Egyptian Nubians (Fahim 1981, 1983; Fernea and Kennedy 1966; Hopkins and Mehanna 2010); others investigate the resettlement site Khashm el-Girba (New Halfa) in eastern Sudan and the nomadic groups (Shukriyya) from the region who also settled there (Salem-Murdock 1989; Sørbø 1985). Sondra Hale (1982) shows that there was an increased migration of Nubians to the greater Khartoum area during this time, and Haydar Mohamed Ali (2008, 2010) looks at later migration to Khartoum from the now-failing resettlement project Khashm el-Girba (New Halfa). The fact that a small group of Sudanese Nubians stayed in the region and gradually built the present-day city of Wadi Halfa has been completely overlooked in this literature. In his study of the processes of economic adaptation in Khashm el-Girba, for example, Gunnar Sørbø gives only brief mention to Nubians who stayed: "the region to the north of the Second Cataract was depopulated of all but a few 'bitter-enders' who refused to leave the area" (Sørbø 1985: 58). The only source representing the Nubians' perspective on the process of staying and rebuilding the city of Wadi Halfa along the shore of what is now Lake Nubia can be found in an account by a resident of the city that was recorded by Andreas and Waltraud Kronenberg (1984) in 1974, approximately a decade after the city was submerged. Many parallels with the present case can be seen in this historical document—for example, the disintegration of the community over the matter of relocation, their flight to higher ground in the hills, and the difficulties of living and procuring food in such a situation.

In the case of the Hamdab Dam, only about a third of the Manasir moved to the state resettlement sites between 2007 and 2010. This outcome could not have been foreseen in the 1990s when the planning process began; initially,

many people, seeing no other option, had elected for resettlement in the state projects. Likewise, their exodus to the desert highlands to escape the rising waters was neither planned nor desired. The majority expected that they would move to the new settlements that had been promised them on the shores of the future reservoir; these are within the region considered to be their homeland and their traditional territory. By compiling multiple sources, I calculate that there were about 9,000 Manasir families who had stayed in 2010. This number includes only families living in Manasirland; migrants and itinerant workers are not included. I estimate the number of families from Manasirland living in the state resettlement sites (al-Mukabrab and al-Fidda) during the same period to be around 2,500.

In contrast to the approaches and studies outlined above, which look at the consequences of resettlement or the question of whether and why resettlement fails and how this can be improved, my research focuses on the dynamics of the processes connected with resettlement. I ask how opinions and ideas about resettlement developed and particularly how the attempt to stay took shape in practice. My study thus joins recent research that recognizes the wide variety of forms of migration and displacement and critically examines the omnipresent paradigm of mobility in the social sciences. Our studies consider the act of staying and those who stay and how this relates to mobility (see Bissell and Fuller 2011; Gaibazzi 2015; Lubkemann 2008; Stepputat 2002, 2009). Yet, staying does not mean immobility. To begin with, for the Manasir, the attempt to stay meant forced movement by being flooded out. Moving out, in turn, is characterized by a standstill, by a slowing of everyday life—but also by rapid transformation, as will be seen.

The political processes and their manifold entanglements at various levels and scales are only examined in this study where they are relevant to the local situation and aid in understanding it (see chapters 1 and 2). The dam construction, flooding, and displacement of inhabitants are events that are local, but at the same time also national and international. I concentrate on local lifeworlds, and in particular on how the people in Manasirland experience, grapple with, and conceptualize these events. Complementing my work is a study by Ali Askouri (2014), who extensively documents the international linkages, the dam construction politics of the Sudanese government, and the specific problematic of the Hamdab Dam and the forced resettlement connected with it. Askouri is from Manasirland and works as an economist, human rights activist, and representative of the three affected groups abroad at the London-based Leadership Office of the Hamdab Affected People (LOHAP). He chose to publish his study in Arabic in order to ensure that it reached the wider Sudanese public and to make his work accessible to the people it is about. Alongside this, he has written numerous articles in English, which together with the publications of the anti-dam NGO International Rivers Network (IRN) have played a

key role in informing the global public about the developments on the Fourth Cataract since the beginning of the project.

Recent studies on the massive interventions currently being undertaken by the Sudanese state in the form of large-scale infrastructure projects, investments in agriculture, and other transnational investments emphasize the tremendous impacts that these have for local groups (e.g., Hoffmann 2013; Verhoeven 2011a). However, there has been almost no research that looks at what this specifically means at the local level, particularly in the case of dam projects. A noteworthy exception is my colleague Tamer Abd Elkreem's study (2018) on the interactions between government officials, non-state, and local actors on the regional and national levels in the case of the Kajbar Dam, another contested dam project in the Sudan. My study shows how social groups as (involuntary) parts of an infrastructure regime attempt to actively participate in shaping this regime and thereby contribute to the contingent processes of its formation. In the confrontation with government officials and building on local rationalities, an alternative plan (the "local option") emerged that challenged and reinterpreted the assumptions and goals of resettlement as a social technology for governing displacement.

The purpose of my research is to arrive at a deeper understanding of what it means for a social group to be driven out of their worlds of meaning and how local perspectives and practices give shape to daily life in the midst of a crisis, in a world that is falling apart. I focus mostly on the period of the flooding and the attempt to rebuild a life on the edges of the reservoir. In other words, my aim is not merely to fill a neglected empirical gap but also to contribute to the research on uncertainty, crises, and displacement. This extends the specialized field of forced migration studies and opens it up for examining the dynamic relations between crises, transformations of life, and the cultural production of places. The following section provides an overview of the anthropological perspectives on these three topics, which are of central relevance to my research, in order to clarify my methodological positions and theoretical aims. More detailed theoretical discussions of my approach will be presented in the empirical chapters on each topic.

Crumbling Worlds of Meaning: Things Fall Apart

The flooding of Manasirland took place over a period of around ten months—a drawn-out process that nobody had anticipated at the outset. Before the eyes of the inhabitants, some 80 percent of their agricultural land and two-thirds of their villages sank beneath the Nile. To escape the progressively rising water, many families had to move to higher ground in the desert further inland multiple times. No one knew exactly how the regime of the river would change as

it formed a reservoir. Above all, no one knew whether it would be possible to stay or how life could go on in such a situation and in the future. Filled with despair, existential uncertainty, and a sense of powerlessness, the inhabitants were torn between staying and going. The hope of returning that is often described by migrants and refugees was absent here: there was no way back, no question of a possibility of return. What had once been their homeland had been swallowed by the waves.

How is this type of displacement experienced—being expelled from a familiar world, from the places that one inhabited and in which one planted the crops that provided a livelihood? How do the men, women, and children experience the dramatically changing physical and social environment? And how do they maintain their commitment to staying and the practical processes this involves in a situation of radical uncertainty, of not knowing what will happen? In other words, what sorts of possibilities are there to make a life in a world of meaning that is falling apart, and how is this connected with various visions of life and the cultural creation of places for living in? The attempt to stay cannot be analyzed from a perspective that takes as its starting point the standard of a settled, sedentary lifestyle and "natural" rootedness of cultural identities in territories, according to which displacement leads to "uprooting" and ruptures (see Malkki 1992, 1995). Geopolitically inspired concepts are similarly inadequate, for they reduce the desire to stay to territorial claims and access to resources. Rather, it is necessary to capture both political processes and lived realities—the practices that create meaning, spaces, and knowledge, as well as subjective experiences. To this end, I will briefly describe the approach that I have adopted as suitable for understanding these various aspects of displacement.

An Uncertain Future

The topic of uncertainty and crisis has gained renewed interest in current social science research (e.g., Beck and Knecht 2016; Böhle and Weihrich 2009; Mergel 2012). Particularly in the context of (urban) Africa, uncertainty has been described in recent years as an omnipresent experience of life (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 1). Prior to this, interest focused on the "crisis" (Mbembe and Roitman 1995: 324), followed by studies critical of this characterization that searched for alternative concepts and perspectives to capture the growing experience of uncertainty and instability (see Makhulu, Buggenhagen, and Jackson 2010). More recent studies revisit the idea of "crisis," calling for a critical analysis of this term and its use in African studies (Goldstone and Obarrio 2016: 7).

Both older and newer anthropological studies have shown that actors actively engage in interpreting, influencing, controlling, and reducing misfor-

tune and uncertainties such as those connected with illnesses (HIV/AIDS). This may involve, for example, poison oracles or strategic reliance on family resources and connections (see Beckmann 2015; Evans-Pritchard 1976; Haram and Yamba 2009; Kroeker 2015; Whyte 1997). It is generally a process of doubting, weighing options, negotiating, and responding to a series of different alternatives in relation to structural constraints, as people attempt to create possibilities and space for action (Jenkins, Jessen, and Steffen 2005).

In addition to more specific problems, anthropologists are interested in the normalization of permanent states of exception in situations of continuous instability (e.g., war) that are marked by "chronic crisis" and uncertainty (Vigh 2008: 7). They describe those affected as creative and reflexive actors who continually adjust their actions strategically and tactically to the rapidly changing social environments in order to survive the present and envision possibilities for the future (Vigh 2006; see also Honwana 2005; Scheper-Hughes 2008).

Studies of uncertainty likewise emphasize the agency and productivity of actors in relation to structural constraints. They consider how people maneuver between constraints and potential opportunities and how they experience, process, and cope with uncertainty. The conceptual focus is on tactics and strategies, which are often presented in terms of ends-means calculations (see, for example, Utas 2005). Here reflexivity is linked to, or even equated with, a calculating form of rationality. At the same time, there seems to be an unquestioned assumption that the experience of uncertainty immediately and exclusively triggers calculations and actions for making the situation more plannable and manageable. This seems to be rooted in a specific way of thinking about the future that is idealized in the Global North—namely, that both the near and more distant future are always planned by oneself or are supposed to unfold according to an individually shaped, preconceived plan. But uncertain situations—or rather, the tension between the present, an unknown future, and ideas about the future—do not just motivate activity; they may also produce passivity and boredom and often a limited power to act, leaving actors forced to wait and do nothing (Hänsch, Kroeker, and Oldenburg 2017; Hage 2009; Janeja and Bandak 2018; Stasik, Hänsch, and Mains 2020). What is left when, in spite of all one's attempts and maneuvering, the desired goals and visions seem to be failing or cannot be realized according to plan? What is the role of endurance, waiting, being patient, and hoping under such conditions?

This is not to claim that actors do not make any plans, whether in everyday or challenging situations, or that they do not engage in reflection—quite the contrary: a crisis situation calls nearly everything into question (Spittler 2012: 32). By focusing on the individual power of agency, however, the key question is pushed to the background: namely, how people jointly produce meaning and knowledge in situations of uncertainty, how they find ways to anticipate and take actions to alter the situation, and above all, what practices

they consider relevant (in spite of setbacks or possible failures) in terms of a meaningful way of living.

Uncertainty is a basic part of our interaction with the world and our existence as humans; thus, finding certainty and security is a continuous process. Enduring extended periods of uncertainty is nearly impossible. As a rule, therefore, actors attempt to negotiate and establish routines, forms of action, attitudes, and interpretive patterns in order to deal with uncertainty. Before the flooding of their land, the people in Manasirland were frequently confronted with situations of everyday or existential uncertainty—for example, dealing with serious illness in lives that were already precarious. These were framed situationally in various ways and courses of action chosen accordingly. But what happens when the degree of uncertainty that is felt in certain moments increases and no longer seems manageable, when fundamental societal institutions threaten to collapse, and when routines, everyday knowledge and practical knowledge no longer seem relevant? This is a different situation, one in which it is not possible to calculate likelihoods, assess risks, or make predictions about the future.

When I write about "uncertainty," I mean a feeling and awareness of not knowing—that is, an unforeseeability of the immediate and more distant future, of how situations will develop and how practices can be carried out. This is guided by the definition given by Susan Reynolds Whyte: "Uncertainty refers to a lack of absolute knowledge: inability to predict the outcome of events or to establish facts about phenomena and connections with assurance" (Whyte 2009: 213).[7] Merely not knowing or being able to predict developments, so long as this is partial, does not necessarily cause fear and uneasiness or elicit worry and doubt—that is, a feeling of uncertainty. What I am referring to is an existential state of not being able to foresee how life will be able to go on and how one's survival is to be secured. The future is not predictable or foreseeable because the conditions upon which one's subsequent life depends cannot be assessed.

In a purely theoretical sense, of course, the future is always uncertain and unpredictable. However, from an anthropological perspective, what is of interest is how people experience and interpret their situation. In order to avoid diluting analytical categories, it is important to ask how and when people experience a sense of uncertainty in the context of their everyday life and existence. Conceptually, I define uncertainty in connection with a phenomenological and epistemological understanding of familiarity with the everyday worlds that constitute people's worlds of meaning (Schütz and Luckmann 1973: 99–241; Schütz 2004: part I, ch. 7–10). Familiarity not only evokes feelings such as comfort, but also entails routinized, reliable knowledge and competence; these are called into question when problems arise or certain elements of a situation seem unfamiliar. Whether this elicits a sense of uncertainty often depends on the degree to which the problems are common concerns and/or situations that

one has personally encountered previously—that is, matters that can be assessed based on experience and that allow for applying various well-proven paths of action; it likewise depends on the degree to which the unfamiliar/unknown elements are relevant for the actors or can be ignored in the situation at hand (for a more extensive discussion of this, see chapter 4). Uncertainty is thus, in my analysis, not simply a general, everyday state of affairs, but rather something that "befalls" people. In certain situations, especially in cases of displacement, uncertainty (that is, various degrees of unfamiliarity) is experienced more radically because a world of meaning is being disrupted and therefore questions about life in the future shift to the center of attention alongside reflections on life in the past.

The concept of uncertainty has recently been thematized within studies of migration as well (see Kleist and Thorsen 2017). Here, however, the concern is mostly with goal-oriented, calculated assessment of risks and decision-making processes in the course of migration (e.g., Williams and Baláž 2015). In an article on violent conflicts and refugees, Cindy Horst and Katarzyna Grabska define uncertainty as "imperfect knowledge and the unpredictability of the future" (Horst and Grabska 2015: 4). They understand the lack of knowledge primarily in terms of lack of information. In addition, the study is limited to situations of conflict-induced displacement. As indicated above, however, uncertainty is not just about lack of information, but also the disruption of routine knowledge, institutions, and experiential knowledge and the threat to a certain state of being. This also means that uncertain situations include the perception of change. In this study I trace not only the changes to circumstances and social practices but also to the state of being and the way that one's being-in-the-world is experienced. Because we experience the world through our *Leib* (the lived body) (Csordas 1994), it is important to also consider how sensory perceptions alter corporeal experiences.

Transformation and Crisis

Janet Roitman (2013) rightly criticizes reliance on "crisis" as a dominant narrative in our time, resulting in the term being treated as self-explanatory without reflecting upon what it means to talk about "crises," how this produces knowledge and what kind, and what political interventions it is used to legitimize. Does the ubiquitous talk about crises make the crisis unusable as an analytical concept? I treat crises neither as something existing a priori nor as a continuous, general situation. The crucial question is how people experience events and what it means when actors interpret and portray situations as crises. This makes it possible to judiciously use the term and distinguish it from other concepts—for example, "catastrophe" suggests a social and normative collapse and, as such, implies that people are helpless victims dependent on aid

(Spittler 1989: 23). A crisis, by contrast, is fundamentally an "open situation" (Spittler 2012: 33) with an end and outcome that cannot yet be foreseen. In this study, I look at how the experience of uncertainty changed at various turning points and during critical events, and I elaborate the kinds of crisis or crises that this ultimately produced.

Gerd Spittler (1989) describes a crisis as a situation in which established strategies are no longer effective. The hunger crisis in the mid-1980s among the Tuareg nomads in Niger was an exceptional situation that was distinct from the food scarcity and chronic hunger that accompanies a precarious livelihood. The possibilities of life are fundamentally threatened in such a situation. This is the existential meaning captured in the etymology of the word (Greek *krino*: separate, decide, judge; Koselleck 2006: 358) and the sense that concerns me here. My study differs from Spittler's (1989) examination of "social action during a hunger crisis" in that it does not look at periodically recurring events, but rather a situation in which people are driven out of their worlds of meaning and are confronted with rapid and radical changes. What do people do in the face of such radical change?

In contrast to the creativity and flexibility discussed above as characteristic of actors in situations of permanent instability, conventional studies of resettlement emphasize a conservative and risk-avoiding strategy among the resettlers. This is attributed to the "multidimensional stress" that is considered a primary characteristic of the resettlement and is the greatest during the phase of physical displacement and resettlement in a new location (Scudder and Colsen 1982: 272). In a multistage model of the process—the "stress model"—Scudder and Colson (1982) derive generalizable and predictable behaviors of resettlers (and other displaced persons). In order to cope with the stress, they argue, the resettled persons avoid changing established practices as far as possible and reject new, innovative possibilities until an "adaptation" has happened; that is, until the previous standard of living has been achieved (Scudder and Colson 1982). Scudder writes that "the majority react to such stresses by clinging initially to the familiar. They react conservatively—as if a sociocultural system was a closed system" (Scudder 1993: 132).

According to this view, the things that were previously meaningful to people assume the status of an unchanging "old way"; traditional practices that belong to a since-vanished world and have no place in the new location are, at first, preserved in response to stress even though they are no longer useful. This interpretation of a stress-induced conservative attitude corresponds to a mechanistic and deterministic conceptualization of cultural transformation processes (A causes B). As a counterargument to this explanation of the lack of innovative behavior, one could refer to studies of diffusion of innovation in non-resettlement contexts, which show that as a rule it takes a number of years for new practices—for example, new agricultural techniques—to be

completely adopted. In other words, this timeframe is the rule even in more ordinary circumstances and not an exception resulting from a situation of stress (see Rogers 2003).

In social science studies of so-called natural disasters and catastrophes, one again finds the assumption that a devastating event results in an absolute rupture between "before" and "after." It seems as though at the moment the event occurs the past falls apart and something new must begin. Some researchers, as Edward Simpson critically remarks, therefore describe the "state" of a society after such an event as a "tabula rasa" (Simpson 2012: 331–336). In this research area there is a long-standing controversy about whether catastrophes lead to sociocultural transformation or to continuity of practices (Henry 2011: 222). The problem with this way of formulating the issue is that it implies that there is a stable and static "before" that can serve as a basis for identifying and evaluating changes.

What do people do when fundamental life practices such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and ways of life along the river can only be performed to a limited degree or not at all? Does everything become senseless? This would mean that, for example, keeping livestock would suddenly have to seem to the peasants, even retrospectively, to be an incomprehensible, useless practice. The radical response to this would be the end, the collapse of a way of life. To avoid determinism and an assumption of purely goal-oriented rationality, it is methodologically necessary, following Max Weber, to interpret the webs of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhänge*)[8] without implying a causal relationship between cause and effect, reason and action (A causes B) (Weber 2019: 84–85). According to Theodore Schatzki's theory of social practice (2010), desires, hopes, and other motivations do not determine actions according to some natural course. Rather, it depends on how past practices can be endowed with sense from the perspective of the involved persons in light of the current circumstances and with regard to the future. Schatzki writes that "what makes sense to someone to do: it makes sense to do something *given* certain state of affairs and *for the sake of* some way of being" (Schatzki 2010: 120, italics in original). "For the sake of some way of being" refers to the future—for example, for the sake of continuing a peasant way of life. The "practical intelligibility" of practices—that is, their meaningfulness and understandability or "making sense to someone to perform an action"—guides actions and generates meaning through engagement in the world (Schatzki 2010: 114, 115). Practices are always linked with the past—that is, loaded with traditions—that shape present actions but do not determine them a priori (Schatzki 2010: 207). As meaningful and interrelated actions, practices and their relational connections with things, nonhumans, organisms, and artifacts form "arrangements," which, following Schatzki, I understand not as stable orders but rather as fluid nexuses of elements in relations with one another (Schatzki 2002: 18).

Rather than asking whether a transformation takes place or not, I am interested in showing how practices are continued, rearranged, and created anew or abandoned. Influenced by globalization debates about the existence of multiple global "flows," the metaphor of the flow has become increasingly popular as a model for describing cultural processes, often with a positive connotation of life and movement (Féaux de la Croix 2011: 489). There is no question that life is constantly in flux and the world, too, is constantly being made, rather than being something fixed and preexisting. However, most of the time things remain largely the same, and changes are incremental and sometimes quite trivial in nature; only a few events give rise to change (Schatzki 2010: 200). How, then, should fragmentations and fissures be understood within this state of flux—the moments when the flow of habitual repetition and its continuous difference is interrupted and blocked by the real physical obstacle of a river and its flowing water? It is precisely along these fault lines where changes can be analyzed, or rather, where ruptures and upheavals in poststructuralist studies and theories can be identified.

Teresa Koloma Beck describes the disruption of the stream of everyday experiences in her study of the limits of normalization of war as a "rupture in the flow of transitivity," namely when it is no longer possible to interpret present experience in terms of former experiences (Koloma Beck 2012: 139). This rupture occurs, for instance, when it is no longer possible for actors in a wartime situation to organize their activities in a way that would allow them to continue to carry out the habitual flow of their everyday lives—for example, because agriculture is no longer possible. My research has its starting point, in a sense, at precisely this sort of rupture. Rather than postulating a complete rupture between the past and the present or a collapse of society, I show how webs of meaning and knowledge are continuously woven together and how practices are generated that are neither something entirely new nor do they represent a re-establishment of the old. Worlds of meaning are characterized by the fact that practices of shaping life create relationships, form horizons of experience, generate meanings, and make sense to people as something relevant and familiar (Schütz and Luckmann 1973). Following Arto Haapala (2005: 40), I consider familiarity with the surrounding world and with daily life as it is carried out in physical places to be an existential structure of being-in-the-world. Places are constituted in the everyday through activities and are simultaneously fundamental to human life and practices. Thus, if places are understood as sites of practice, they are characterized by a "structure of feeling" that is expressed in various activities and embedded in them (see Lambek 2011: 197; Schatzki 2010). The activities in a place, in turn, open up spaces for life (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4).

The creation of spaces is not automatic, however, but may be highly contested, as in the case of displacement. With their refusal to leave, the peasants

go against the power interests and the incorporation plans of the government, engaging in a politics of occupation and an attempt to create places to live. Similar activities are described in studies of displacement and mobility as "place-making" or "emplacement" (e.g., Bjarnesen 2013; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Hammond 2004; Jansen and Löfving 2009; Turton 2005). To capture the transformative and political character of the meaningful creation of places and spaces, I instead consider processes of appropriation. Under "appropriation," I understand here the occupation, use, and incorporation of places in practice, which are in turn space-creating. The concept of appropriation refers to dialectical and open processes of re-contextualization, re-organization, and transformation, which follow an unforeseeable course and are marked by various moral dilemmas and conflicts (Beck 2001, 2012).

The attempt to stay involves processes that aim at testing meaningful ways of living in a crisis situation in which certainties otherwise taken for granted, conventions, sources of significance, and bodies of knowledge are disrupted and challenged—not as an individual process, but as a societal one.

The Epistemic Space of the Research

Shared Experience: Joint Knowledge Production

My analysis is based on three central elements that structured my research and the insights and interpretation that resulted from it. The first is a long-term perspective that includes understanding and being familiar with the people's living situation before the critical events. The second is witnessing the critical events firsthand and experiencing them along with my interlocutors; and the third is the unfolding of these events and the social responses to them.

Contemporary anthropological studies—particularly on topics such as epidemics, forced displacement, and war—rely heavily on methods of narrative analysis and discursive reconstruction of events. In most cases, this research begins after the life-changing events have already occurred, and rarely are the researchers directly acquainted with the situation before these events (see Simpson 2012). Often, to be sure, there is no other option than relying on accounts of events by those who experienced them; this is frequently the case in migration studies. Nonetheless, this is not the same as experiencing events firsthand, with one's own body in real time, together with those affected and hearing from a variety of voices. Transformation processes cannot be captured retrospectively: the many performative nuances and the immediate experience of fleeting moments, as well as the temporal dimension of, for example, shifts in the experience of uncertainty. In addition, in a retrospective account the events are already layered with later happenings and experiences, decisions

have been rationalized, and the events have been embedded in narratives as people attempt to give coherence and meaning to their experiences.

Alongside these known limitations of narrative methods, however, a concern noted by Unni Wikan (2000) is of particular importance—namely, that the first-person narrative excludes the interactions with others, with the surrounding world, during the events in question. However, it is precisely in everyday conversations, interactions, and shared activities that different experiences, moods, and intentions are conveyed—and in this way other, multifaceted insights emerge. But for this to happen, it is absolutely essential to have knowledge of the previous everyday practices and social structure: who is connected with whom and in what way. Meanings, social relations, practices, and their transformations can only be reconstructed through interviews to a very limited degree. Instead, they can only properly be grasped through shared experience that is able to draw on multisensory experiences and is based on embodied knowledge—a radical form of participant observation that has long been called for in anthropological field research (see Okely 1994; Spittler 2001).

In order to capture transformation processes and experiences, I found that the comparison with life before the flooding and the changes in practices, moods, body language, and other forms of articulating and externalizing experiences formed a tangible basis for interpretation that came close to the lived experience. This also included the silence of bewilderment and the inability to find words to express the events and experiences. The lack of speaking, the glances, gestures, and the response to this non-verbal interaction—referred to by Wikan as "resonance" (1992)—produced empathy and a shared sense of what it means to be displaced: a situation that was completely new, strange, and incomprehensible to both me and my research partners. Now I was not the only one to experience moments of confusion and uncertainty, not the only one who was unable to make sense of certain things and situations that were so familiar to everyone else. The inhabitants of Manasirland had also lost the sense of things being taken for granted and self-evident; they did not know what would happen and found themselves in another world—in their once-familiar surroundings that were now scarcely recognizable.

Epistemologically it is important to note here that such a situation demands heightened attention and interpretive effort from all involved. Together we attempted to assess the situation, to analyze and interpret it, and for months we were occupied with trying to orient ourselves, clearing paths, building shelters and taking them down again, finding a place to stay and departing again. Everyone was required to contribute their knowledge and formulate impressions and opinions. In this way, diverging viewpoints and theories about the circumstances met each other in practice, and a process began that I refer to as "shared knowledge production"; this, in turn, created new meanings. Ethnographic knowledge production always takes place in an intersubjective space;

that is, it is "co-produced" (Fabian 2014: 206; White and Kiven 2014: 190). Building on this, in my study it means not just the co-production of knowledge by the anthropologist together with her interlocutors, but that all participants contributed to knowledge production through joint discussion and analysis of problems and situations.

Whether they involved the rising of the river, questions of whether the river water was still safe to drink, or theories about the functioning of the dam, problems were continually addressed and examined in practice. This included things and procedures that had once not required much discussion or social cooperation because they were part of the inhabitants' routine skills and embodied knowledge—for example, how and where to set up an irrigation pump. Thus, I was able to follow a process of shared knowledge production that unfolded in the emergence of practices—for example, fishing—and in turn co-constituted the practices and projects. Those involved in knowledge production included both those in favor of resettlement as well as those opposed to it; they included men, women, and children, peasants, teachers, and traders. I, too, participated in it, although the amount I could contribute was limited. However, my opinion was sought after to a much greater degree than during my previous research stays: I was asked about my view of things or what I would do. I was recognized as a scholar carrying out research, but above all as an individual and a participant who brought with her different cultural knowledge that might perhaps offer other perspectives on particular problems. Together we explored current problems emerging from the situation. This was a reflexive process that Peter Hervik describes as "shared social reasoning" and that incorporates diverse points of view but nevertheless can produce mutual understanding and agreement about subsequent practical actions (Hervik 1994: 86).

"Shared social reasoning" is also practiced among the inhabitants, as they draw on different frames of reference. The "reflexivity" involved in this process is here to be understood not just in its common meaning as an aspect of discourse and the active conscious awareness of individuals; rather, it is something that is attained through shared experience, which in turn emerges from being involved in daily activities (see Hervik 1994: 92). It is a dialectical process in which I examine my experiences in the light of the experiences of others and compare them with each other. In this sense, as Michael Jackson (1989: 4) describes it, we "test" and "explore" how our experiences and viewpoints connect with those of others: "It means placing our ideas on par with theirs, testing them not against predetermined standards of rationality but against the immediate exigencies of life" (Jackson 1989: 14).

My discussion shows that the analytic process in research does not constitute an external perspective in which a theory is applied to impose order on a certain observed reality; rather, it is a process that takes place *within* the

particular situation, during which different viewpoints and theories of the participating actors unfold in practice (see Hastrup 2011: 427). Anthropological knowledge production is thus a form of "lateral knowledge" or "lateral theorization," to use Frida Hastrup's terminology (2011: 434). This also means that an analysis is never completely finished, but always provisional—it is a partial picture of certain moments at certain times and places. Things continue to run their course, producing other problems and requiring people to undertake additional analyses. Nor is the work of the anthropologist finished with the conclusion of her field research.

The aspects that I examine in this study are themes and activities that became relevant during the crisis and assumed a dominant place in people's lives, received attention, and were discussed in everyday conversations. During my field research I lived in a household consisting of a young couple and their five children. The village where I spent most of my time was in lower Manasirland, which turned out to be the area most severely affected by the flood. From the start, I also traveled regularly upstream to middle Manasirland, to Shirri, and further on to the area around al-Kab in upper Manasirland in order to have a methodological basis for comparison. The flood reached these regions several months later. Socioeconomic differences were another reason for visiting other areas: Shirri Island was and continues to be the administrative and cultural center of Manasirland. In contrast, the region in lower Manasirland had been poorly structurally integrated for decades and was marked by poverty.

Over time, a relative of my host family, Abbas (34), became a constant companion, as well as an assistant and partner in my research. Women do not generally travel alone. As a female foreigner, it is possible to move about alone in male contexts, but traveling in the company of a man proved to make interactions more comfortable for everyone, because this more closely resembled common gender practices. Abbas also operated the motorboat that I later purchased secondhand at the weekly market in Shirri. Once the floodwaters began to rise, travel by land became very difficult, whether using the usual means of transportation (donkey, pickup, truck) or on foot.

My interpretations are based primarily on participation in everyday life and activities as well as observation in situations in which others were also observers—for example, women who watched the rising waters of the Nile, or men who watched while fish were weighed. I followed all these emerging activities and themes in different villages over time so as to saturate and diversify my experience through comparison. In contrast to their previously work-filled everyday life, after the flooding, the villagers found themselves forced into idleness and therefore could generally be found at their places of residence. In this eventless stream of time, any happenings—such as my visits—were welcome diversions. I sat for hours with friends and acquaintances, with women and children and some men as well; we drank tea, ate, dozed in the midday

heat, and conversed. Visitors came and went, and frequently group discussions arose on themes of current interest or in response to things I had asked about. In addition to this, I visited projects that were being started—for example, agricultural projects—and talked with those responsible for the planning and implementation. With the exception of a few interviews held in English, all conversations took place in Sudanese Arabic.

I carried a video camera with me during my research, to capture certain moments in time and recording talks with several people whom I interviewed repeatedly over the course of a number of months. Originally this was intended as a form of visual ethnography, with the camera serving as a means to generate insights through methods such as "video elicitation" and "feedback" (see Banks 2001; Hänsch 2021; Pink 2001; Postma and Crawford 2006). On a number of occasions, we viewed excerpts from the film material and discussed the changes that it recorded. However, over time the camera increasingly evolved into a documentary camera, capturing the sounds and images that formed a chronicle of historically important events. The inhabitants saw my audiovisual recordings, in part, as a historical document for remembering the period before the flooding and the events that followed. At the same time, they also saw it as a means to bear witness to the injustices of the flooding and forced eviction. In this way, the inhabitants used my camera as a stage in order to provide visual evidence and call for the attention of the international community (Hänsch 2021). Attempts by Manasir representatives to broadcast their situation via the media usually failed, partly due to the lack of technological equipment and connection to electrical and internet infrastructure, but mostly because of state control and media censorship. The flooding had already been going on for weeks by the time they finally managed to get a reporting team from the TV broadcaster Al-Jazeera from Khartoum to visit the region.

An additional method to capture the transformation processes was the comparison of historical and contemporary household data. On the basis of a survey collected by Kurt Beck in the early 1990s, I carried out a new survey with the same households that incorporated the original questionnaire.[9] This made it possible to better assess the scope of the changes that I observed: for example, the resettlement economy and the new economy in the state resettlement sites. This also directed my travels to new places and gave me opportunities to meet people and make new contacts.

Research during a Crisis

It was not originally my plan to conduct research in the middle of a crisis, and I hope that in the future I will not again find myself in this situation. In spring 2006, in the context of a different research project in northern Sudan, I visited a number of families in Manasirland in order to record their views

about the impending resettlement and to visually document their agriculture and some of the villages before the dam went into operation. The documentary film produced from this work had various purposes, including that of making institutions such as the World Bank and other international experts aware of the problems connected with the dam construction and the resettlement plans (see Hänsch 2006a). At that time there was little known about the issue (see Beck 1997a).

During my visit and the later analysis of the interviews while editing the footage, I was greatly moved by the villagers' experiences and decided I wanted to engage with the topic in more depth. I subsequently developed a research project with the plan of following inhabitants during the process of displacement and building a new life in the state resettlement sites. At the time there was no way to know whether the government would fulfill their call for local settlements or what the relocation process would look like; this was projected to take place in 2008. The situation was politically tense, and it seemed likely (especially given what is known from previous studies of resettlement) that the villagers would have a very challenging time ahead of them. But the flooding of the villages before resettlement had even started was something beyond even the worst imaginings and also completely counter to all international guidelines for planning and managing resettlement. At the beginning of my field research in spring 2008 and a few months later when the waters began to rise, only a small number of families had been relocated to one of the state resettlement areas. As a result of the fluidity of the situation and the unexpected events, my perspectives and the focus of my research shifted. As Elizabeth Colson writes about conducting research in critical situations, "improvisation is the order of the day; a willingness to follow events a necessity" (Colson 2007: 327). I therefore concentrated on the events unfolding before me and directed my theoretical formulation of my research questions, as outlined above, to the themes and activities that emerged from this.

Uncertainty and flexibility are one of the strengths of ethnography; however, the experience of uncertainty can also lead to great emotional stress in the form of fear, despair, confusion, and moral and ethical dilemmas. This applied not only to me, but also to the inhabitants who found their lives threatened. The experience of the flooding is comparable with the "existential shock" that Antonius Robben and Carolyn Nordstrom (1995: 13) identify in connection with experiences of violence. In such moments it is challenging to maintain anthropological professionality.

I, too, asked myself whether I should stay or leave. Some acquaintances and Manasir representatives had repeatedly asked and even urged me to see that my film material documenting the beginning of the flooding and the destroyed villages be circulated to the public as quickly as possible. Due to technological requirements, the editing and dissemination of videos could only take place

in Khartoum.[10] I therefore departed from Nafisa's village, which was not (yet) affected by the flooding—even though I knew that I might not be let through the road check points upon my return, and even though I was aware that leaving would mean missing important moments for my research. But above all, I did not want to abandon my acquaintances and friends as they faced the rising waters. This moral dilemma was also described to me by Hissain (38), when he left for Khartoum the day previously for a doctor's appointment. Ultimately, my own fears were probably also a factor in my decision. When Hissain and I returned a few days later, the village was nearly completely under water. Neither of us had expected this—especially not so quickly.

Conducting research during a crisis depends on certain necessary preconditions, particularly when the situation is highly politicized and directly involves interests of the state and the conflict divides people into opposing camps. The most important condition is the cultivation of long-term mutual trust. After a certain point, both the people in Manasirland and the government—each for their own reasons—stopped allowing outsiders in the region, which was closed off by means of military camps set up in the desert.

Archaeological missions of various international actors, including the British Museum, which were carrying out salvage excavations in the region of the Fourth Cataract and had received permission from the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) in Khartoum, came to bitterly experience the consequences of this lack of trust and their failure to concern themselves with the controversies around the Manasir resettlement. They found themselves caught up in the storm of events and were expelled from Manasirland by the peasants and Manasir political representatives. The excavations could not be completed. In the context of the political dynamics and the state's displacement strategies, the motivations for this act were as follows: First, as several peasants explained to me, the missions' connection with the state led some to believe that they were collaborating with the dam authority.[11] Second, the Manasir wanted to prevent the region's cultural heritage from ending up in state or international museums. Above all, the politicization of their cultural heritage and the archaeological activities was driven by the hope that the international missions and their respective governments would publicize the local problems created by the megaproject and thus exert pressure on the Sudan government. A Manasir representative in Khartoum described this in an interview with me in March 2006 as follows: "We do not want people to come and fight with us, but we want their moral support; the support to draw international attention to the problems here, so that what is happening in this part of the world becomes known." In retrospect, by expelling the archaeological missions, the Manasir triggered the archaeological community studying the Sudan to reflect upon and reconsider their own practices in light of the postcolonial context (see Hafsaas-Tsakos 2011; Kleinitz and Merlo 2014; Näser and Kleinitz 2012).

The subaltern may, to a certain degree, be able to speak for itself, but it remains—in spite of the possibilities of digital communication—here, as in many cases, difficult to make oneself really heard (see Spivak 1988). Who heeds the words of "a few peasants"? I, too, found that my credibility was called into question when I reported on the flooding and the situation in Manasirland at an audience with the German ambassador in the Sudan. In spite of the myriad challenges and limitations of our work, it is important that anthropologists not be silent, but rather find a way to report about violations of law and rights and to involve oneself politically and practically (see Edelman 1999: 31; Scheper-Hughes 1995).

The extent of my role as an "anthropologist as witness" was not something I could have foreseen during my research, and it only became clear when Manasir representative Ali Askouri together with the human rights organization European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) submitted a criminal complaint in Frankfurt/Main in May 2010 against high-ranking managers of the German engineering company Lahmeyer International (LI) on account of coercion, abandonment, and destruction of property. As manager and principal consultant of the dam construction project, Lahmeyer International was responsible for the overall designing, construction, supervision, and commissioning of the Merowe Dam. The complaint charges senior managers of the company, who were personally in charge of the project's construction and implementation, with human rights violations such as deprivation of adequate housing due to flooding caused by the dam.[12] ECCHR was founded by a group of lawyers and is involved in litigation and advocacy of human rights issues, including bringing civil and criminal cases against transnational corporations. With my testimony and photos, I was able to provide evidence used in the inquiry by the public prosecutor's office.

In situations of crisis and conflict, those affected expect the people involved and researchers to show empathy and explicitly take a stand. This creates certain limitations for a type of research that is based on the principle of a "change of perspective" and aims to capture the different views of a variety of actors (Streck 2013: 38). It proves to be challenging to navigate between opposing parties and interests in a conflict in order to gain diverse perspectives on the situation. The mistrust and tension between the opponents and proponents of resettlement, as well as between inhabitants and the dam authority became increasingly fraught, with the result that through my involvement I was inevitably seen by one side or another as being "complicit." In such a situation, the possibility of contact with certain actors is closed off, and relationships may be instrumentalized. Simply having a conversation with a person in Manasirland who was considered to be pro-resettlement could, in some situations, create suspicion and give rise to wary questions about which side I was on and what aims I was pursuing. Discretion and careful assessment of the situation

at any given moment were important; particularly crucial, however, were the endorsement and support of trusted acquaintances.

The Executive Committee as the political representative body of the Manasir supported my research both in Manasirland and in the state resettlement areas. Since the majority of the community still lived in their homeland, I decided to visit the resettlement areas only at a later point in time. An extended stay in the state resettlement site al-Mukabrab at the beginning of my research would have been interpreted by many in Manasirland as indicating collaboration with the people there as well as with the government. Abbas, a supporter of staying, albeit a moderate one, switched frequently between the "communities of complicity." Depending on my conversation partner, I likewise adhered to Abbas's strategy, which he explained thus:

> It's simply like this now, that when one is in al-Mukabrab, one says: yes, it is better here, the living conditions are better, in the homeland it is bad, I will soon move; and when one is here again [in Manasirland], then one reports: al-Mukabrab is bad, the people are doing poorly, they have no income . . . . In just the same way they say in al-Mukabrab, that the people here [in Manasirland] are at the end of their rope. (July 2008)

Due to the high potential for conflict, it was not possible for me to gain more comprehensive insights into the perspective of the dam authority in Khartoum about the planning process and the resettlement. In the eyes of some of the Manasir in favor of staying, this would have been tantamount to collaborating with the "enemy." The Sudan is not a small country, but water is not the only thing carried by the Nile: news and rumors also travel along its course by means of networks of relationships. In addition, establishing closer access to the engineers and planners in the Dams Implementation Unit (DIU) would have been a slow and difficult process. This body was and is essentially closed to outsiders, and the flow of information is—contrary to the typical practice in the Sudan—tightly controlled; contractors are required to maintain strict secrecy. My attempt to make contact with the office of the German engineering company Lahmeyer in Khartoum was unsuccessful for this reason. My interactions were limited to a few, largely unfruitful visits to the headquarters of the dam authority in Khartoum and several somewhat more fruitful discussions with the local office in al-Mukabrab. Following the advice of my acquaintances, I generally also tried to avoid gatherings at which representatives of the central government were present, because they would undoubtedly not have approved of my stay in Manasirland or in the state resettlement sites—in spite of the fact that I had official permission to conduct research.

During the implementation of state-organized megaprojects, conflicts inevitably emerge between various interest groups. Research that strives for "thick participation" (Spittler 2001)—that is, which places particular emphasis on

the personal involvement of the researcher—is in such cases therefore best carried out by a team of multiple researchers who are distributed among the individual groups or at least different levels of the state (or administration) and society. Conducting research in such situations, and particularly participating in public debates surrounding what is happening, means making a personal decision, for doing so carries with it the risk of potentially losing access for further research in that region (in my case, the Sudan), for example, as a result of repression by the government.

Structure of This Book

For heuristic reasons and to ensure the understandability of the situation and its dynamics, the book follows an essentially chronological structure, starting with the period before the dam and the impending destruction of their homes, through to the period during and after the flooding. The individual chapters examine various aspects of the worlds that fell apart and the processes of transformation and re-formation.

To set the scene for these events, in chapter 1, I provide an introduction to the places I studied in my research by looking at the various ways they have been seen and portrayed. Rather than providing the usual cultural, geographical, and historical overview of the topic, I focus on the entanglements of points of view, places, and times. The Merowe Dam, Manasirland, and the resettlement sites are closely interwoven with one another through the interdependent production of places that are brought together to form a complex entity through the development of a large-scale infrastructure regime. To this end, I look ahead and include the perspectives of the families relocated to al-Mukabrab about life in the resettlement site.

In chapter 2, I go back in time and provide a historical analysis of the turning points in the debates about the dam and resettlement. Specifically, I look at how controversial ideas about resettlement and the vision of staying in the homeland unfolded in connection with political practices of the government and the dam authority. Specific governance practices increasingly led to delegitimation of the authorities in Khartoum and to conflicts both with the dam authority and within the Manasir community. I show how the variously situated actors and their conflicting interests led to new leadership of the community, headed by urban Manasir, and how an autonomous zone emerged during the struggle to stay that had state-like organizational structures and oscillated between self-governance and negotiation with or integration into the state.

Chapter 3 describes the compensation scheme and explores the many dilemmas that arose in the face of an uncertain, faraway future and the impending displacement. In their effort to shape the future, the inhabitants established a resettlement economy based on the anticipated compensation payments.

Additionally, a wave of re-migration took place as Manasir living elsewhere returned in order to make their own claims related to the upcoming resettlement and compensation. These endeavors to affect the resettlement process are contrasted in the second part of the chapter with the dramatic escalation of social conflicts and the perception of the rising Nile during the period of the annual flooding. By turning my gaze to everyday life, I analyze how awareness of the beginning inundation was temporarily suppressed, along with the existential crisis that it brought with it. In the third section, I describe the escape from the flood waters at various times and places, as well as an attempt to halt its progress by building a levee in the historical center of Manasirland. Closing the chapter, I analyze the experience of the flooding as a "cold war."

In chapter 4, I elaborate a phenomenological framework based on the concept of familiarity; this framework enables me to capture the deep shock experienced when the familiar falls apart—when people are expelled from their worlds of meaning—and the fundamental uncertainty that goes with this. Focusing on the processes of settling in and making a wasteland habitable, I analyze the creation of makeshift arrangements and the relational reconfiguration of social spaces and entanglements. In connection with this, I describe local concepts of improvisational practice and the increased relevance that they gain in the face of the task of settling in a new place and dealing with an uncertain situation.

Chapter 5 examines the experience of everyday life in a makeshift arrangement that is characterized by forced idleness, stasis, waiting, being patient, and both hoping for and doubting the possibility of staying due to the unpredictability of the steadily rising waters. I identify different types among those choosing to stay and the various convictions that motivate their decision to pursue a life along the edge of the river-turned-lake in spite of the critical situation. In the constant tension between staying and leaving, communication—"talking up" staying and presenting it in a positive light—played a particularly important role. At the same time, various activities also contributed to making the vision of staying a reality; responses ranged from active engagement to an increasing lack of motivation in the face of the crisis situation.

In chapter 6, I analyze the paths and practices that are tried out in the endeavor to stay in the homeland, and how these simultaneously create social spaces and infrastructures that allow life to continue. Looking at the examples of repeated relocations, efforts to continue to keep livestock and establish agricultural projects, as well as making use of the reservoir (boat travel, fishing), I show the effort to continue meaningful practices on the one hand, and, simultaneously, to make use of newly available possibilities on the other. Of central concern are the different ways of responding and engaging with the radical transformations of the social and environmental world, and how possible ways of life emerge from this, are tested, and generate knowledge.

In the conclusion, I bring together my arguments and theses and propose a theoretical synthesis in which crises are to be understood as open moments. This is followed by a consideration of the relevance of my findings for anthropological studies of displacement and forced migration.

In the individual chapters, I juxtapose different places, times, perspectives, practices, and experiences. Through this form of narrative montage, I attempt to recreate the paradoxes, fragmentation, and ruptures of a world that is falling apart—its instability and the orders that simultaneously take shape. I hope also to evoke a sense of the situations and experiences of being displaced that can hardly be captured adequately in words. The technique of juxtaposing and linking unequal and dissimilar elements is often used in montage to portray fractures and contradictions, and it is applicable not just in film, but also in ethnography, which attempts to bring to life often fragmented and contradictory social realities (see Suhr and Willerslev 2013).

NOTES

1. In 2011, the country split into two states, the Sudan and South Sudan; at the time the dam was planned and at the time the research for this book took place, the Sudan was still a single country.
2. A wave of large dam-building projects worldwide began in the 1950s and peaked in the late 1970s (Dwivedi 2002: 709; McCully 1996: 2). Up until 1949, there were some 5,000 large dams around the world; by 1998, this number had increased to 45,000, with the majority located in Asia (China, India, and Japan), North America, and Europe (McCully 1996: 3–6; World Commission on Dams 2000: 8–9). The number of persons displaced due to dam projects between the 1950s and the year 2000 is estimated at 40 to 70 million (World Commission on Dams 2000: 104). Looking at development projects more generally, experts estimate that some 15 million persons are displaced annually (Cernea 2008: 20).
3. Already in 2014, a news article reported that Ethiopia was exporting electricity to the Sudan: "Sudan, Djibouti and Kenya Set to Benefit from Ethiopia's Power Supply," *Sudan Tribune*, 6 October 2014. Retrieved 6 September 2017 from http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article52662. The construction of a high-voltage line between the two countries began in 2009; the idea was originally proposed in the 1980s. At the time of writing, Ethiopia was planning new dams that will allow it to export electricity to the Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, and other east African countries—and in the longer term to the Arabian Peninsula (see Matthews, Nicol, and Seide 2013).
4. Sebastián Ureta, writing about a new traffic and transport system in Santiago, Chile, and drawing on the work of Foucault, describes repair measures undertaken in response to complications that arise in large sociotechnical systems as "normalization," the main result of which is the preservation of the power of the government and its planning experts (Ureta 2014: 369). In the case of resettlement, stagnating agricultural

projects, for example, are subjected to a rehabilitation process; in Khashm el-Girba (New Halfa) in the Sudan, this included the construction of an additional dam. In other cases, people had to relocate a second time after it became clear that land surveys had been inadequate and the area to which they had been assigned was within the flood zone (see McCully 1996: 78).

5. An example of this is the pioneering study by historian Thomas Hughes (1983) on electrification and the spread of electric lighting in Europe and the United States. In the context of dam projects, the historical study by Julia Tischler (2013) on the Kariba Dam examines the interaction between scientific knowledge production and political power processes during the project planning, resulting in an uncertain, conflict-laden, and emotionally charged implementation process (see also Mitchell 2002).
6. Dam projects around the world are nearly always accompanied by social science studies of the implementation process and displacement they cause. Often these studies are not readily accessible—for example, unpublished dissertations at US universities. Several historical ethnographies mention attempts by forcibly displaced persons to establish new lives along the shores of reservoirs (see Jing 1996). These cases date from before any efforts had been made to develop guidelines for resettlement following dam projects. The acclaimed resettlement study by Elizabeth Colson (1971) in what is now Zambia is a borderline case. At the time (1956), there were neither widely followed models for resettlement nor were new settlements constructed. The majority of the peasants were transported by the colonial government to areas further away from the river and had to rebuild their lives, their homes, and their farms there with little assistance from the government. Civil protests and their goals and demands are highly varied; often they protest the expropriation of land and the marginalization of local groups in the decision-making processes surrounding dam construction and resettlement. Resistance to resettlement and displacement is often connected with protests against dam construction itself. There are only a few examples of successful anti-dam movements (see Gray 1996). One such project is the Sardar Sarovar Dam in India, in which construction was halted for a number of years as a result of protests (see Drèze, Samson, and Singh 1997). For an overview of protest movements and resistance in the context of "development-induced displacement and resettlement" (for example, due to infrastructure projects such as dams and highways, extractive industries, agribusiness, and nature conservation projects) see Anthony Oliver-Smith (2010). I will not attempt to provide an exhaustive overview of the literature on displacement and resettlement, which in general takes a multidisciplinary approach, albeit with a clear dominance of anthropological approaches and field research. For an overview of the research on "forced migration" from an anthropological perspective, see Dawn Chatty (2014), Elizabeth Colson (2003, 2004), Anthony Oliver-Smith (2009), Irge Satiroglu and Narae Choi (2015), and Thayer Scudder (2005).
7. The concepts "uncertainty" and "insecurity" are generally difficult to strictly distinguish, because their meanings overlap and the experience of insecurity can, at times, produce uncertainty. Following Whyte, I understand insecurity as a social condition derived from structural problems such as an inadequate health care system, social inequality, or insufficient protection from violence (Whyte 2009: 214–215). In contrast

to uncertainty, risk relates to the calculation of likelihoods in order to assess situations and make claims about the future. Assessments of risk are based on an understanding of many different possible results and consequences. Risk could also be referred to as controlled uncertainty. Risk can be calculated; uncertainty cannot (Gross 2010: 61, 188n15).

8. Standard English translations of Weber render *Sinnzusammenhänge* as "contexts of meaning." The translation here is inspired by Clifford Geertz's formulation in *Interpretation of Cultures*: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs" (1973: 5). While Geertz describes culture primarily in terms of symbolic systems, Weber uses *Sinnzusammenhang* in a much broader sense.
9. The survey used the questionnaires on the composition of household members and agricultural work and economy from Kurt Beck's first and second surveys in Manasirland 1992 and 1994, each with twenty-three households. An additional new section consisted of open-ended questions about opinions on resettlement. The households were distributed across the entire Manasirland. I carried out this survey in 2008–9 with a total of thirty households. The respondents were the male heads of each household; in two households, I additionally surveyed women responsible for the household. The previous heads of a number of the households interviewed by Beck were no longer alive, and I spoke with members of the next generation instead. For families living in the state resettlement areas al-Mukabrab and al-Fidda, I adapted the survey accordingly. Both the household surveys and the visual documentation were designed as a long-term study and audiovisual documentation.
10. The options available to me at the time were limited. I produced a short video clip in Khartoum that was posted online in Germany on YouTube on 8 October 2008 under the title "Merowe Dam Floodings" (Retrieved 19 January 2024 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBB_5sjLgZk).
11. The dam authority vaunted its cooperation with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) and the salvage archaeology carried out to preserve the cultural heritage of the affected areas (see Lahmeyer International 2002: 5–6, Annex 7). Later, a museum dedicated to the affected groups was established near the city Merowe. The Manasir cynically considered this museum a farce, for it was created by precisely the people who drove them from their homes. In addition, the museum is not located within their territory, but in the state of those who make up the political elite of the Sudan and are responsible for the displacement of the Manasir.
12. On the initiative of the NGO Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is likewise investigating violations of human rights by the Sudanese government in connection with the construction of the Merowe Dam. For an extended discussion of the human rights violations, the responsibilities of corporations, and the action filed against Lahmeyer International in Germany, which was suspended in 2016 upon decision of the public prosecutor's office, see Valerie Hänsch and Miriam Saage-Maaß (2018).