The aim of the study is to analyse the interactions of development intervention and conflict in northern Uganda, where over 20 years of armed conflict between the Lord’s Resistance Army rebel movement and the Government of Uganda have caused massive population displacement. The study provides an explanation for the marked increase of development intervention in the region between 2001 and 2006, and an analysis of the effects of this increase. A further aim of the study is to discuss some of the theoretical and methodological challenges in studying development interventions, and to comment on the possibilities for analysing the impacts of intervention on conflict.

The research is underpinned by the idea presented by Koponen of intervention as an inseparable element of the modern notion of development. The study can be characterised as methodological developmentalism, that is, the study of how the developmentalist complex works and what it produces in northern Uganda. Long’s notion of social interface is applied as a tool to this analysis. Following Long, it is suggested that development intervention is embedded in complex frameworks and arenas, which must be analysed in order to understand the interactions of intervention and conflict.

The transformation of humanitarianism in the post Cold War era is introduced as the normative and conceptual framework into which development intervention in northern Uganda is embedded. The historical, political and international context of conflict in northern Uganda is presented as the arena into which intervention in the region becomes entangled. It is argued that the increase of development intervention in northern Uganda after 2001 can be understood through an analysis of this framework and arena.

The study maintains that development intervention and conflict have interacted in northern Uganda, and that such interactions are multifaceted and complex. It is shown that the interactions of intervention and conflict occur both at the level of regional conflict dynamics and donor relations, and on the ground in northern Uganda, in encounters between organisations and individuals involved in intervention processes. The study also shows that such interactions are generally unacknowledged by development and humanitarian actors in the region.

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