Université de Montréal

Growing Up in Exile: An Ethnography of Somali Youth Raised in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

par

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Résumé

La violence chronique qui caractérise la Somalie depuis plus de deux décennies a forcé près de deux millions de personnes à fuir. Cette ethnographie étudie l'expérience de l'asile prolongé de jeunes Somaliens qui ont grandi au camp de Kakuma, au Kenya. Leur expérience est hors du commun, bien qu'un nombre croissant de réfugiés passent de longues années dans des camps pourtant conçus comme temporaires, en vertu de la durée des conflits et de la normalisation de pratiques de mise à l'écart de populations « indésirables ».

Nous explorons la perception qu'ont ces jeunes de leur environnement et de quelle façon leur exil structure leur perception du passé et de leur pays d'origine, et de leur futur. Ce faisant, nous considérons à la fois les spécificités du contexte et l'environnement global, afin de comprendre comment l'expérience des gens est façonnée par (et façonne) les dynamiques sociales, politiques, économiques et historiques.

Nous observons que le camp est, et demeure, un espace de confinement, indépendamment de sa durée d'existence ; bien que conçu comme un lieu de gestion rationnelle des populations, le camp devient un monde social où se développent de nouvelles pratiques ; les jeunes Somaliens font preuve d'agentivité et interprètent leur expérience de manière à rendre leur quotidien acceptable ; ces derniers expriment une frustration croissante lorsque leurs études sont terminées et qu'ils peinent à s'établir en tant qu'adultes, ce qui exacerbe leur désir de quitter le camp. En effet, même s'il existe depuis plus de 20 ans, le camp demeure un lieu de transition.

L'expérience de jeunes Somaliens qui ont grandi dans un camp de réfugiés n'a pas été étudiée auparavant. Nous soutenons que cette expérience est caractérisée par des tensions entre contraintes et opportunités, mobilité et immobilité, isolation et connexion ou victimisation et affirmation du sujet – et des temporalités contradictoires. Cette étude souligne que des notions comme la convivialité ou la pluralité des appartenances développées dans la littérature sur la cohabitation interethnique dans les villes ou sur l'identité des migrants aident à appréhender le réalité du camp. Cette ethnographie montre également que, loin d'être des victimes passives, les réfugiés contribuent à trouver des solutions à leur exil.

Mots-clés: camps de réfugiés, humanitaire, asile, jeunes, migrations transnationales, anthropologie du déplacement forcé, représentation, Kenya, Kakuma, Somalie.

Abstract

Chronic violence has characterized Somalia for over two decades, forcing nearly two million people to flee. This ethnography studies the experience of protracted exile of Somalis who were raised in Kakuma refugee camp, in Kenya, and are now young adults. Their experience is relatively uncommon, although increasing numbers of people spend long periods in camps conceived as temporary, due to the length of conflicts and the normalization of excluding populations deemed undesirable.

I explore how young people perceive their living environment and how growing up in exile structures their view of the past and their country of origin, and the future and its possibilities. In doing so, I regularly shift perspectives from the specificities of the context to the global environment, to understand how people's experience is shaped by (and shapes) the social, political, economical and historical dynamics in which it is embedded.

My observations can be summarized into a few broad statements: regardless of how long it has existed, the camp is and remains a space of containment; conceived as a rationally organized space to manage populations, the camp becomes a messier social world where new practices develop; young Somalis display agency and interpret their experience in a way that makes the present bearable; frustration grows when Somali youth complete their education and struggle to establish themselves as adults, catalyzing their determination to leave Kakuma. Indeed, although refugees have been living there since the early 1990s, the camp remains a space of transition.

Although there have been a number of studies on refugee camps in Kenya, no study has focused on the experience of Somali youth raised in a refugee camp. I argue that this experience is traversed and shaped by tensions between constraints and opportunities, mobility and immobility, isolation and connectedness, victimization and affirmation of the subject, citizenship and refugeeness – and by conflicting temporalities. This ethnographic study highlights the fact that notions such as conviviality or the multiplicity of people's belongings developed in the literature on interethnic cohabitation in cities or the ethnic identity of migrants, help us to understand the camp experience. This research also shows that, far from being powerless victims, people actively contribute to finding solutions to their exile.

Keywords: refugee camps, humanitarianism, asylum, youth, transnational migrations, anthropology of forced displacement, representation, Kenya, Kakuma, Somalia.

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List of acronyms used

AMISOM	African Union Mission In Somalia
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAD	Canadian dollar
DRA	Department of Refugee Affairs
EU	European Union
ID	Identity document
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
KSh	Kenyan shilling
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAU	Organization of the African Unity
RCK	Refugee Consortium of Kenya
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SYL	Somali Youth League
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
U.K.	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USY	Union of Somali Youth
U.S.	United States of America
USD	American dollar
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

On January 1, 2013, 1 Canadian dollar was worth 85 Kenyan shillings. Unless otherwise specified, this is the exchange rate used in this thesis.

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This thesis would not have been written without the support and responsiveness of Deirdre Meintel, my supervisor, who trusted my capacity to carry out this project through even though I had been out of school for many years. Thank you. Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship for funding this research.

I am indebted to my former colleague Maria Vargas Simojoki who read the first draft of this thesis and never failed to ask insightful and critical questions, while also making very sensitive observations about Somalis, Somalia and humanitarianism. The many and challenging discussions that I have had with displaced people and fellow aid workers over the years have also greatly stimulated my reflection.

My father has paid patient attention to every single comma and, earlier on, made me realize that the history of my own family was probably not foreign to my interest in the experience of exile. Displacement does ring a fairly intimate bell. Sometimes in Kakuma, speaking with youth about the past of their family, I wondered why their stories were so fragmentary, until they would return the questions to me and I would realize how little I knew about my own family's path into exile.

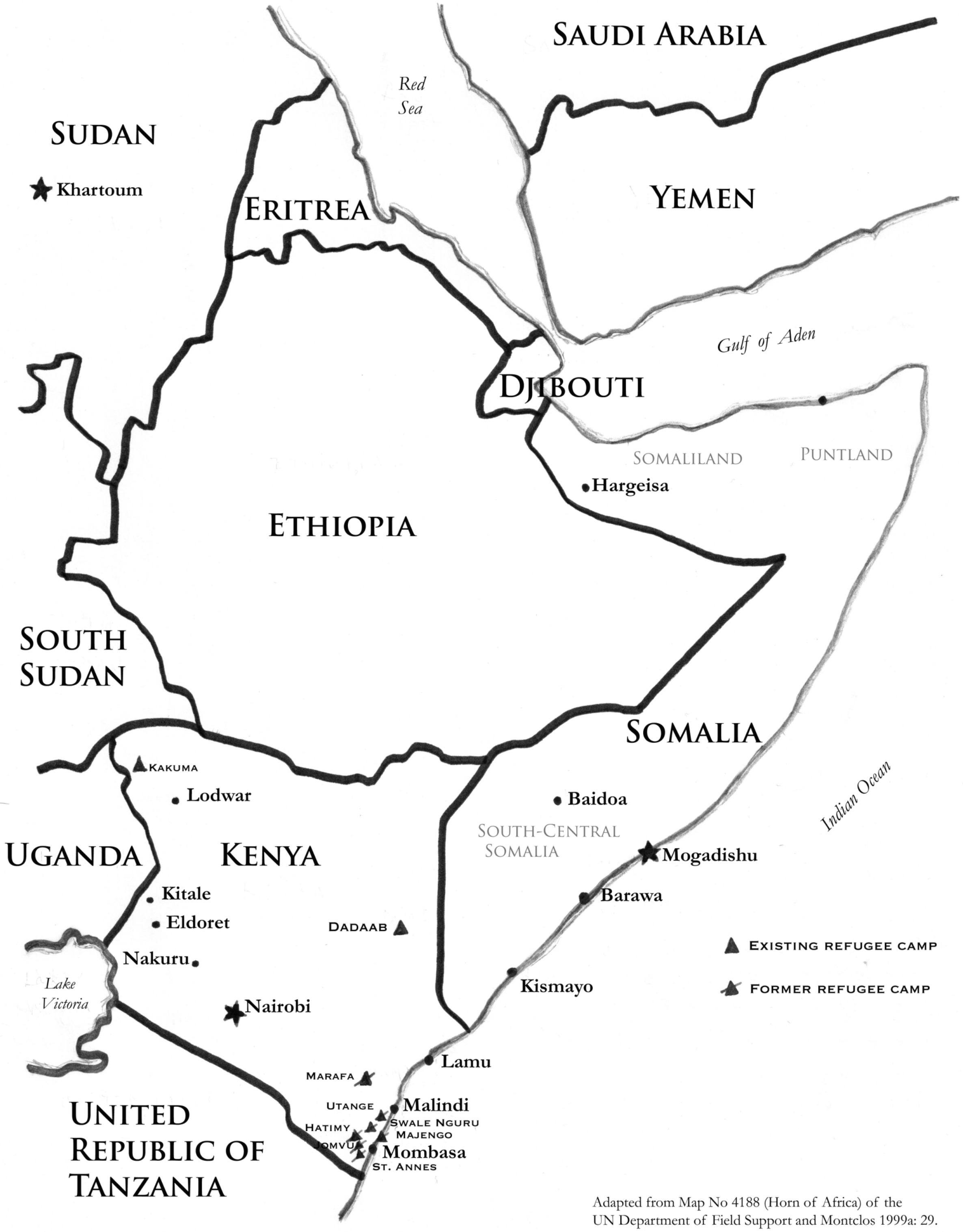
All my appreciation goes to Hubert who has not only been a wonderful and encouraging interlocutor, but has also cared for Simone so I could write.

Many aid workers in Kakuma showed remarkable patience in answering to my countless questions. I am immensely indebted to FilmAid who provided me a lively home there. Wholehearted thanks to Dawn, Craig and Gwyneth for always receiving me so generously in their cozy Nairobi home.

Above all, thank you to the residents of Kakuma who turned the camp into a hospitable place. Day after day, you welcomed me warmly into your homes. You offered me so many meals and conversations. I am incredibly grateful to all those who shared their time, thoughts and amazing stories with me, helped me navigate the camp and invited me into their lives. As you are not named in this thesis, I will not do so here.

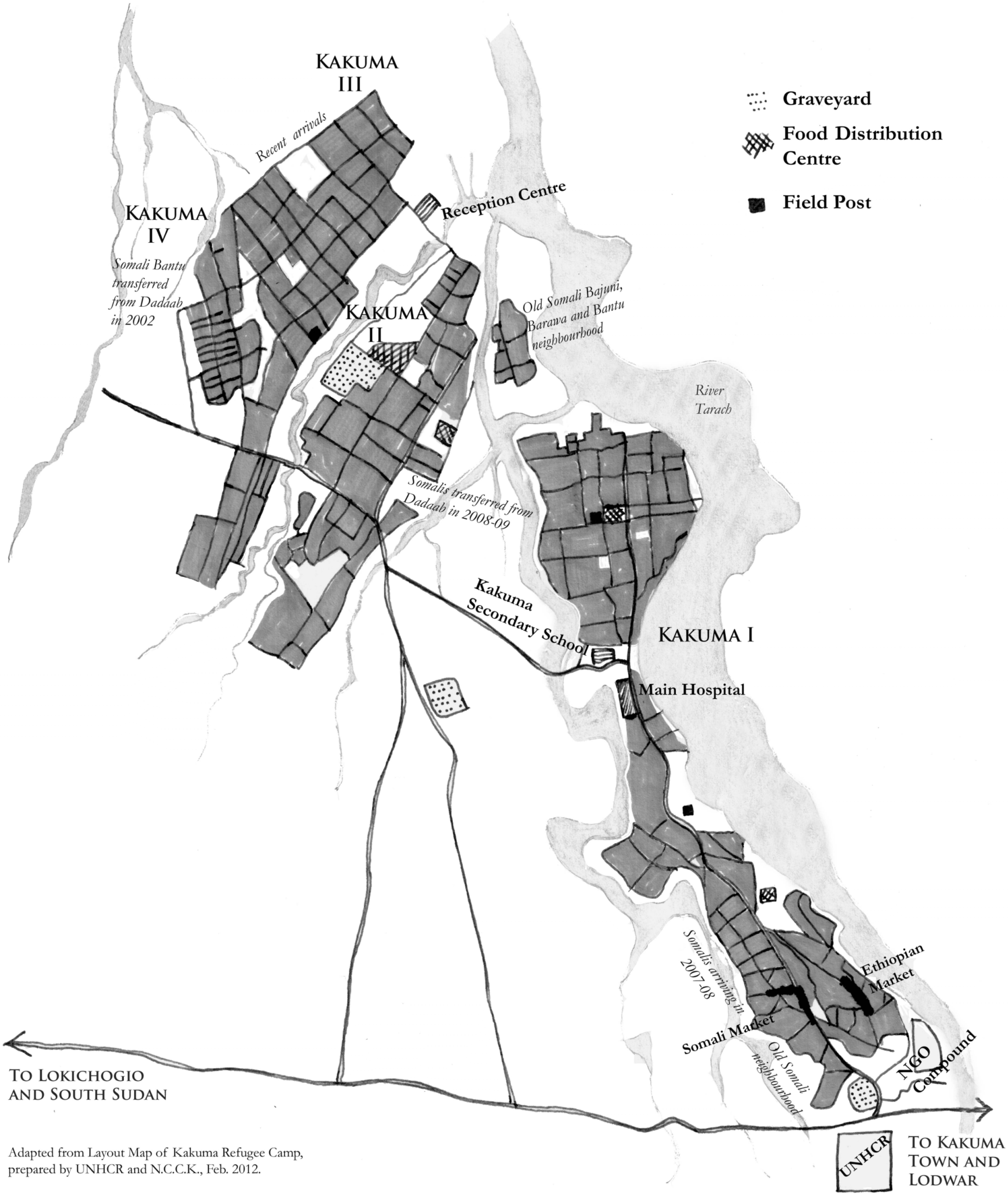
Chapters 2 and 3 have been turned into an article published in the *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*, “Civilising Kakuma: Shared experience, refugee narratives and the constitution of a community.” Chapter 6 has served as a basis for “Grandir au camp : diversité culturelle, convivialité et identité ethnique,” an article submitted to the journal *Diversité urbaine*.

Figure 1: Map of the Horn of Africa and Kenyan refugee camps


Saudi Arabia
Red Sea
Sudan
Khartoum
Eritrea
Yemen
Gulf of Aden
Djibouti
Somaliland
Puntland
Hargeisa
Ethiopia
South Sudan
Somalia
Kakuma
Lodwar
Baidoa
Indian Ocean
South-Central Somalia
Uganda
Kenya
Mogadishu
Kitale
Barawa
Eldoret
Dadaab
▲ Existing refugee camp
Nakuru
Lake Victoria
Kismayo
Former refugee camp
Nairobi
Lamu
Marafa
Utange
Malindi
Hatimy
Swale Nguru
Majengo
Jomvu
Mombasa
St. Annes
United Republic of Tanzania

Adapted from Map No 4188 (Horn of Africa) of the
UN Department of Field Support and Montclos 1999a: 29.

Figure 2: Map of Kakuma refugee camp


Graveyard
Food Distribution Centre
Field Post
KAKUMA III
Recent arrivals
KAKUMA IV
Somali Bantu transferred from Dadaab in 2002
Reception Centre
KAKUMA II
Old Somali Bajuni, Barawa and Bantu neighbourhood
River Tarach
Somalis transferred from Dadaab in 2008-09
Kakuma Secondary School
KAKUMA I
Main Hospital
Somalis arriving in 2007-08
Ethiopian Market
Somali Market
Old Somali neighbourhood
NGO Compound
UNHCR
TO LOKICHOGIO AND SOUTH SUDAN
TO KAKUMA TOWN AND LODWAR

Adapted from Layout Map of Kakuma Refugee Camp, prepared by UNHCR and N.C.C.K., Feb. 2012.

Introduction

The year was 2010, and I was spending time in Dagahaley, one of the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya, to conduct some research for Médecins sans frontières. That is how I came to meet one of the organization's medical assistants, a 20-year-old Somali[1] who started talking about the recent birth of his first child. He said it had reinforced his desire to find a way out of the camp, a place that felt like an open-air jail. He did not want his son to be like him, someone who knows only life in the camp. He explained that he was born in Dagahaley and had never even been to the town of Dadaab, just a few kilometres away. Some days later, the programme manager of a non-governmental organization (NGO) mentioned that at least 10,000 children had been born in the camp to parents who were also born there.

I gradually came to realize that a whole generation of exiled Somalis had been born and raised in the Dadaab camps and that they were now young adults. I should have become aware of this long before, given that the camps had existed for more than 20 years and that I had been working in such settings for many years. Nevertheless, this was the first time I grasped this fact of their lives. I started reflecting on their experience. Few nations have been so massively displaced for so long. Palestinians, Afghans and the Sahrawi come to mind. I was used to hearing refugees talking about how things were back home, before they fled. But these young people, unlike their parents, had no recollections of Somalia, no other experience to compare their current conditions with. Yet, their community had certainly told them many stories about their homeland. So I wondered how they imagined the land of their parents, how they experienced the camp and how they imagined their future, given all the constraints imposed by camp life and exile.

---

[1] I use "Somali" to refer to the nationality and not to the ethnic group, unless otherwise specified. This therefore includes Somalis who do not belong to one of the main Somali lineages but to minority groups such as the Bantu or the Bajuni.

My questioning quickly became intertwined with interrogations about how and why camps have become such a usual response to mass displacement, given their unsuitability. Very strong criticisms of camps as a long-term solution have been levelled not only by academics but also by the United Nations (UN) agency specifically mandated to protect and assist refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It has been repeatedly noted that camps are far from being ideal places for the development and fulfilment of individuals. As early as 2004, UNHCR stated that "[i]f it is true that camps save lives in the emergency phase, it is also true that, as the years go by, they progressively waste these same lives. A refugee may be able to receive assistance, but is prevented from enjoying those rights – for example, to freedom of movement, employment, and in some cases, education – that would enable him or her to become a productive member of a society" (UNHCR 2004: 3). I found convincing perspectives on what has turned the camp into such a usual response pertaining to containment and the ordering of "undesirable" populations in the writings of Arendt (1951 [1968]), Hyndman (2000), Malkki (1995a), Nyers (2006) and Agier (2008). But I noticed that although displacement situations continue to occur and persist, so that more and more young people living in camps are likely to have grown up in them or been born there, their experience has hardly been studied. Chatty and Hundt (2005) have explored the experience of Palestinian refugee youth and Chatty, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Crivello (2010) that of Sahrawi youth living in camps in southwestern Algeria. No one had focused on Somali youth. This is what motivated the present study. In the end, I headed to Kakuma, another Kenyan camp where thousands of Somali youth have spent most of their lives, because it offered a safer research environment than did Dadaab.

This ethnography is about the experience of young Somalis, aged 16 to 26, who have spent most or all of their lives in Kenyan camps and now live in Kakuma. Some were born in Kenya; others arrived in the early 1990s as small children. Their parents fled along with millions of people when the Somali state collapsed in 1991. They thought their displacement would be brief. More than two decades later, they are still in exile. The babies they were carrying when they crossed into Kenya are now adults. Most first lived in several camps located near the coastal city of Mombasa. Between 1997 and 1998, when these camps closed, they were transferred to Kakuma. A few had also lived in Dadaab or in a Kenyan city before arriving in Kakuma.

Located in northwestern Kenya, one hundred kilometres from the border with South Sudan and one thousand from Nairobi, Kenya's capital, Kakuma looks like some faraway city. Established in 1992, it does not match the widespread image of a camp as a temporary place where people sleep in tents, waiting for the guns to go quiet before returning home. Shelters are made of branches, mud and metal sheets, and schools, clinics and markets are part of the landscape. It may look like a city, but it is an odd one, as its inhabitants are not allowed to move freely, work or settle where they choose.

In Kakuma, I met young people who had lived there for as long as they could remember and see the camp as a rather normal setting. They often claim that growing up there might not have been ideal, but it was better than being in Somalia. Unlike many children who remained behind, their lives have been relatively free of violence and they were able to study, even though the quality of their education was unsatisfactory. Once they grow older, the camp becomes a space of frustration and limitations, a place to leave. Indeed, although a fair number of refugees[2] have been living in Kakuma for up to two decades, it is still seen as a transitory place. I progressively realized that the experience of the camp was marked by tensions between gain and loss, constraint and opportunity, mobility and immobility, isolation and connectedness or conflicting temporalities.

Throughout this thesis, I aim to look at both the large and small-scale reality of the camp, to try to understand how the refugee experience is shaped by (and shapes) the social, political, economical and historical dynamics in which it is embedded (Bakewell 2007: 11, drawing on Fresia [2007]). I will strive to avoid "the danger of a single story."[3] I try to shift perspectives regularly from the specificities of the context to the global environment, from looking from within to reaching beyond the camp, the two perspectives being closely interconnected (Essed et al. 2004: 4). It is indeed important to situate the camp in relation to global policies intended to confine particular populations, as these underlie the emergence of the camp as the usual response to forced displacement. In the following pages, I first give an overview of the evolution of asylum policies towards ever more rigid exclusion measures. I follow a path that takes us from rich to poor countries,[4] from containment strategies to refugee camps, from the right to seek asylum to the right to stay home. I then briefly consider how the experience of refugees in camps has been approached previously, discuss the aim and rationale of my research and present the structure of my thesis.

---

[2] In this thesis, I use the term "refugee" to refer to people who, in most cases, live in Kakuma refugee camp and, in all cases, define themselves as such. In reality, they might not all fit into the legal category of "refugee."

[3] In a 2009 TED talk, the Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie highlights "the danger of a single story," i.e. of reducing an individual to a single characteristic and neglecting people's complexity. Refugees cannot be considered "only" as refugees. They are individuals with different stories, skills, genders and ambitions.

1. Contextualizing the camp: From the right to seek asylum to the right to stay home

The existence of significant population movements caused by violence and conflict, and the tradition of granting asylum to people fleeing persecution, are not new phenomena (Malkki 1992: 24; Marfleet 2007: 138-139). Texts written several thousand years ago already refer to this practice (UNHCRb). The term "refugee" in its modern sense, as opposed to citizen, is used for the first time in the decades following the emergence of the Westphalian nation-state system. In the late 17th century, the French Huguenots fleeing to England were called refugees (Nyers 2006: 9-10).

The magnitude of forced displacement during the twentieth century, as a result of the two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the dissolution of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and the development of globalized techniques of population management, is nonetheless unprecedented (Nyers 2006: 10; Malkki 1995a: 497; Mann 2011: 85). During this period, the relationship that states and their citizens have with refugees evolves through three decisive stages: refugees first lose their individuality, are then essentialized and finally become a threat (Mann 2011). Before the First World War caused significant displacement in Europe, refugees were typically seen as part of an elite forced to flee for political reasons and were relatively well received (Arendt 1951 [1968]: 267; Sassen 1999: 36). With the war began the "modern mass refugee era" (Sassen 1999: 5), in which refugees cease to be seen as individuals with a personal history and become a potentially politically threatening mass phenomenon, a problem that must be solved (Mann 2011: 91; Nyers 2006: 10; Skran and Daughtry 2007: 15).

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[4] I tend to refer to poor/rich countries, despite their vagueness and relativity of these terms, as I find this more accurate than the South/North designation, which does not refer to the northern and southern hemispheres but rather to a shifting and questionable divide between developed and developing countries. I am also reluctant to use the notion of developed/developing countries because of the contentious nature of the classification, the hierarchy that the typology introduces between countries and the assumption that the only acceptable model of development is that of the West. It is worth noting that rich and poor countries are intertwined when it comes to migration management, as rich countries identify the poor ones as the origin of their migration "problems." Poor countries are also where deterritorialization practices take place.

Standardized management methods emerged during the Second World War. Refugee camps of a military nature[5] were established, while the first international humanitarian operation was conducted in Greece, the country being unable to integrate a million resettled refugees (Malkki 1995a: 499; Sassen 1999: 89). The end of the war stimulated the development of international legal instruments for the protection of refugees (Malkki 1995a: 497, 502; Mann 2011: 101-102). The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*[6] was adopted in 1951 and proposed the first international legal definition of a refugee. The term refers to any person who, "for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (art. 1). At the time, refugees were mostly European, millions of people on that continent having been displaced by the two world wars (Sassen 1999: xiiv). It is not until the late 1970s, due to political crises as well as severe drought in Ethiopia, that the figure of the refugee became associated with masses of poor Africans and Asians (Harrell-Bond 1986: 1).

1.1 Changing asylum policies: Refugees, a problem to solve

Figures compiled by UNHCR invariably show that the vast – and ever growing – majority of refugees live in developing countries (86 percent in 2013, compared to 70 percent a decade before), most often in a country neighbouring their country of origin (e.g., UNHCR 2006: 3; 2007b: 6; 2010a: 6; 2011a: 11; 2012d: 2; 2013b: 2; 2014: 2). Taking into account refugees in an irregular situation and those not registered with the authorities of the country of asylum or with UNHCR, the proportion of refugees in poor countries is actually even greater (Malkki 1995a: 503). The share of the refugee population received by rich countries is therefore minimal, a fact that clashes with the fear-of-invasion rhetoric adopted by certain politicians and media (Duffield 2007: 209; Dubernet 2006; Zimmerman 2009: 75). Two main factors play a role in explaining these numbers. First, most large-scale displacements in the last decades have occurred in regions of the world far from the West. Also, since the end of the Cold War, rich countries have enacted increasingly stringent policies on asylum and migration to "protect" themselves from refugee populations, which are seen as threatening (Bauman 1998: 76; Feller 2006: 511; Hyndman 2000: 2-3; Malkki 1995a: 503).

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[5] Until the establishment of UNHCR in 1950, refugees were considered a military problem rather than a humanitarian one. During the Second World War, they were under the jurisdiction of the Displaced Persons Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (Malkki 1995a: 499).

[6] The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* is hereafter referred to as the 1951 Refugee Convention.

At the end of the twentieth century, with the compression of time and space (Bauman 1998: 121), refugees are no longer just a faceless crowd but also an amorphous looming threat. Even though rapid influxes of large groups of refugees are in fact rare, this attitude raises the spectre of a human tidal wave (Jacobsen 2005: 5; Mann 2011: 82, 99). States and the media commonly convey the idea that the refugee is "an illegal migrant, a potential terrorist, a transnational criminal or at best a likely abuser of the national asylum system" (Feller 2006: 536). The "war on terror" rhetoric that spread after the September 11, 2001, attacks stigmatizes Muslim communities, which constitute a large proportion of the current refugee population, including Somalis (who are predominantly Sunni Muslims) (Zetter 2007: 185).[7]

Asylum, theoretically granted to people whose lives are in danger, "has come to be seen as an uncontrolled 'back-door' route to immigration (Hathaway and Neve 1997: 117) and something that can and should be contained" (Zimmerman 2009: 74). Consequently, the refugee phenomenon is treated as a problem to be solved, by means that include the use of migration policies unsuited to the protection needs of refugees, but appropriate to limiting influxes (Feller 2006: 536; Nyers 2006: 5).

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[7] For example, Afghans, Somalis and Syrians constitute 53 percent of the 11.7 million refugees falling under UNHCR's mandate in 2013 (UNHCR 2014: 2-3). The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is responsible for the protection and assistance of some 5 million Palestinians.

1.2 Legal obligations of states

In principle, the reception and protection of refugees and asylum seekers are not dependent on the generosity of states, but are governed by international instruments. While the right to leave one's country and to seek asylum in another one, set out in articles 13 and 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is not accompanied by the right of entry into a territory, the principle of *non-refoulement*, which requires states to allow refugees and asylum seekers onto their territory and prohibits the return of a refugee to a territory "where his life or freedom would be threatened," is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention (art. 33) and is considered a rule of customary international law (UNHCR's introduction to the 1951 Refugee Convention: 4). It is therefore binding on all states. The 146 UN member states (out of 193) that signed the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees must also ensure that refugees and asylum seekers on their territory are protected and live in decent conditions, or, if they are unable to meet their obligations, cooperate with UNHCR to do so (art. 35).

Although states bear the primary responsibility for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, the refugee regime is based on the notion of collective responsibility. The idea of burden sharing and international cooperation is included in both the preamble to the 1951 Convention[8] and the 1969 Organization of the African Unity *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.*[9] [10] In 2004, the UNHCR Executive Committee noted, however, that states remain reluctant to share the physical burden borne by host countries, including the resettlement of refugees on their territory, and instead advocate for helping through financial support (Long 2010: 79; UNHCR Excom 2004).

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[8] "Considering that the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognized the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without international co-operation."

[9] The 1969 Organization of the African Unity *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* is hereafter referred to as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention.

[10] Article 2 § 4 stipulates that "where a Member State finds difficulty in continuing to grant asylum to refugees, such Member State may appeal directly to other Member States and through the OAU, and such other Member States shall in the spirit of African solidarity and international co-operation take appropriate measures to lighten the burden of the Member State granting asylum."

1.3 Waiting for the barbarians:[11] *Avoidance and control strategies*

If the West does not have problems of refugees on its borders, this "is clearly not a simple accident of geography or history" (Malkki 1995a: 503). The majority of the world's refugees live in poor countries because they are perceived as a threat by rich countries, which in turn leads to ethically unjustifiable containment policies being set (see Bauman 1998: 76). By the 1980s, developed countries began to implement a battery of devices to "outsource" refugee protection and prevent the increasingly threatening "other" from reaching their borders to seek asylum (Betts and Milner 2006: 6-9; Long 2010: 3; Zetter 2007: 181). "A culturally coded racism striates the world of people, separating good from bad, useful from useless in terms of their contribution to international security," writes Duffield (2007: 227). Hence, restrictive policies "no longer have any connection with actual trends, that is, the number of wars, levels of spontaneous migration or existing demands for asylum" (Duffield 2007: 208). This creates an international order that Chimni (2000: 251) and Agier (2005 [2008]: 59) respectively label "global apartheid" and "planetary segregation."

Exclusion measures aimed at "securing the Western way of life" (Duffield 2007: 2) are justified in the name of maintaining public order, intangible security concerns and protecting the privileges of particular groups (Chimni 2000: 250-51). In the 1990s, the security discourse gradually incorporated the theme of refugees, which was turned into a central issue by the Security Council in six major crises, those of Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti and Kosovo. "[T]he language of burden sharing has today been transformed into a language of threats to the security of states. Refugees are now seen as threatening a host country's security by increasing demands on its scarce resources or threatening the security of regions by their sheer presence (Chimni 1998b: 289). The fact that the threat perception can often be attributed to a policy of containment or to the absence of burden sharing is veiled by the language of security" (Chimni 2000: 252).

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[11] In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the South African novelist J.M. Coetzee narrates how the central government of an imaginary empire stirs its population's fears by claiming that an invasion of barbarians is imminent. The barbarians in question are neither revolutionary nor bloodthirsty. They are nomads who wish to live on land they regard as communal. Their crime is not being "civilized." The government leads punitive expeditions against these defenceless nomads. This evokes allegorically the perception that countries have of refugees as barbarous people who should be kept as far away as possible.

Western countries resort to an array of measures to dissuade and prevent migrants from reaching their borders, such as the extraterritorial processing of asylum claims, a low rate of recognition of asylum applications or the fining of carriers accused of transporting illegal migrants (for more on this topic, see Chap. 6, 1.2.2; Agier 2008: 42; Brouwer and Kumin 2003; ECRE 2007: 27-30; Long 2010: 18-21; UNHCR 2011b: 9; Zetter 2007: 181-82). As a result of these restrictive policies, a minority of asylum seekers arrives on the territory of rich countries through legal channels. Thus, even people with real protection needs, who would be recognized as refugees, are not spared by the control strategies against illegal immigration, potentially putting their lives in danger.

Carens (1987) maintains that Western liberal democracies that apply their strict migration policies to dealing with refugees contradict the very principles of freedom and equality of rights (as opposed to privileges) in which liberalism is rooted. Allowing sovereign states to determine who has the right to leave their country and to settle in another one turns citizenship into "an inherited status that greatly enhances one's life chances. Like feudal birthright privileges, restrictive citizenship is hard to justify when one thinks about it closely" (p.252). Yet, in a context of increased mobility and deterritorialization of information, ideas, people, goods and services, while borders are more and more meaningless for a part of humanity, poor populations are increasingly forced into immobility, locked in a territory, inexorably local. It has thus become commonplace to highlight the tension between the hypermobility of the privileged and the confinement of undesirable populations through constantly tighter migratory control measures (e.g., Appadurai 1996; Bauman 1998; Feller 2006: 510; Hyndman 2000). While it remains easier to seek asylum in a poor country, even there, hospitality no longer rules. To seek asylum, an individual must cross an international border. Since 1990, relatively poor countries faced with a mass influx of people have closed their borders over a dozen times (Long 2010: 24),[12] violating the principle of *non-refoulement*.[13] States have explained their decision by highlighting their security concerns or by considerations related to their hosting capacity and stability. Limited physical and material resources, as well as the need to maintain ethnic balance, have been commonly put forward (Long 2010: 73, 341-44).[14]

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[12] Border closures since 1990 include those between Turkey and Iraq (1991), Zaire and Rwanda (1994 and 1996), Tanzania and Burundi (1995), Macedonia and Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan and all its neighbours (2000-2001), Chad and Sudan (2006), Kenya and Somalia (since 2007) and Saudi Arabia and Yemen (2009) (Long 2010: 24).

[13] Although the labelling of border closure as *refoulement* has been the object of significant divergence since the adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention, such closure is now considered an act of *refoulement* (Long 2010: 62-63; UNHCR Excom 1981: Conclusion 22, II.A).

Another way to prevent people from fleeing to another country, which resorts to a similar containment logic without violating international law, is the promotion of regional solutions and "preventive protection" policies. These are at the basis of humanitarian and development programmes aimed at providing protection and assistance to people within their country of origin (Bradol 2011: 239; Dubernet 2006; Hyndman 2000: 17; Long 2010: 352-60). States and international organizations (theoretically apolitical; see Nyers 2006: 27) have come to see this as a substitute rather than a complement to refugee protection. In Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia, this strategy has resulted in the creation of safe zones and humanitarian corridors (Hyndman 2000: 21). Although UNHCR has described this approach in rather positive terms,[15] preventive protection can be depicted as a threat to asylum (Dubernet 2006; Hyndman 2000: 17). This development has impelled Hyndman (2000: xxvii, 21) to write that the international refugee regime has evolved from protecting the right to asylum to championing the right to stay home.

In spite of these restrictions, many refugees manage to cross the border of a neighbouring country – generally a poor one, since these remain more open and accessible than their rich counterparts. This is due to traditionally generous asylum policies,[16] the willingness of states to comply with their international commitments, the proximity of conflict-affected countries, and the difficulty of controlling long and porous borders with limited resources (Harrell-Bond 1986: 15; Long 2010). Refugees' rights are still not fully respected, however, since significant restrictions to their freedom of movement or work are often imposed by states, which tend to delegate their responsibility toward refugees to international organizations (Harrell-Bond 1986: 15; Maltou 1999: 142; Van Damme 1999: 2; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).

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[14] Border closures tend not to prevent refugee movements (Long 2010: 372), as evidenced by the example of Kenya. Although the country closed its border with Somalia in 2007, citing security reasons, several hundred thousand Somalis have arrived in Kenya since that time. They have been received as *prima facie* refugees, based on the definition of the OAU Convention (art. 1§ 2). Yet, to enter the country, people usually have to pay a smuggler and the Kenyan police, which prevents the poorest from seeking asylum, and leads to abuses in the border area (AI 2010: 2, 4; HRW 2009 and 2010: 4, 15-17; Long 2010: 321).

[15] "Whereas the older paradigm can be described as reactive, exile-oriented and refugee-specific, the one which has started to emerge over the past few years can be characterized as proactive, homeland-oriented and holistic." (UNHCR 1995: Emerging trends and strategies)

[16] The traditionally generous approach to asylum of African states is apparent in the broadening of the refugee definition by the OAU Convention that allows the recognition of groups of refugees. A similar broadening of the definition occurred in Latin America with the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention only allows individual recognition (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 57).

Presented as the best emergency (and, theoretically, temporary) solution to governments of poor countries increasingly reluctant to accommodate large groups of refugees, the opening of camps has become the norm in mass influx situations since the 1980s (Fresia 2007: 102-103; Harrell-Bond 1986: 8-9; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 18). This is especially true in Africa, where "circumstances and conditions . . . of long-term refugees have changed significantly – and in almost every respect changed for the worse – over the past two decades" (Crisp 2003: 2). This deterioration is partly due to the protracted nature of the exile. While the number of refugee situations lasting more than five years is constantly increasing because of the length of conflicts,[17] refugees are commonly treated as "temporary guests" (Kibreab 1999: 399) with curtailed rights, perceived as an excessive burden and a threat to stability and the social cohesion of states (Crisp 2003: 3-4; Loescher et al. 2008: 4; Maltou 1999: 136; UNHCR 2011a: 14). The humanitarian response, usually initiated and coordinated by UNHCR, is designed to meet the emergency needs of arriving refugees, but remains in place well beyond that period. Lasting solutions are generally not considered, as refugees are expected to return home quickly. Indeed, repatriation has come to be the only truly acceptable outcome, dethroning local integration and resettlement[18] (Chimni 2000: 254-55; Crisp 2003: 3-4; Kibreab 1999: 390; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 335). This has turned refugee camps, built around the notion of temporariness, into the preferred response to a refugee crisis, even though many refugee situations last well beyond the emergency period and repatriation might not happen for years (Crisp and Jacobsen 1998: 28; Crisp 2003: 3-4; Jacobsen 2005: 108).

Camps were not always the expected response to mass influxes: the term does not even appear in the 1951 Convention. Historically, the local integration of refugees (rather than their exclusion) was the predominant solution (Fresia 2007: 102). Even today, despite steps taken to encourage or force refugees in Africa and Asia to live in camps, it is estimated that at least half of them have settled on their own (without assistance and often without being registered) in the community. Yet, the vast majority of those who receive support live in camps that have become "almost synonymous with the refugee experience" (Harrell-Bond 2000: 1).[19] In a growing number of countries, camps keeping refugees at "the margins of society" (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 221) are not only the recommended solution, but an imposed one. Such confinement is sometimes prescribed by law, sometimes enforced by the implementation of measures that make life outside the camps particularly difficult, such as the restriction of humanitarian assistance to camps, or tedious refugee status determination procedures for those outside (HRW 2009: 43-50; Hyndman 2000: 51; Jacobsen 2005: 31; Kibreab 1999: 390; Moret et al. 2006: 62). Although these provisions do not prevent refugees from settling outside camps, they have the effect of forcing them into illegality, making them vulnerable to abuse and violation of their rights.

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[17] UNHCR defines a "protracted refugee situation" as one that lasts for more than five years and includes a group of at least 25,000 refugees (UNHCR 2014: 12). Some 53 percent of the 10.7 million refugees identified by UNHCR at the end of 2013 were considered to be in protracted displacement situations.

[18] In this thesis, I use the word "resettlement" to speak of refugees going to a third country and not to speak of repatriation to their country of origin.

This predilection for the camp solution has been explained by the complexity of assisting and protecting dispersed populations, concerns for the safety of refugees and the host community[20] and the desire to maximize the visibility of refugees in order to mobilize donors (Fresia 2007: 102; Harrell-Bond 1986: 8-9; Loescher et al. 2008: 5). Humanitarian assistance and protection policies are also closely associated with the will to maintain non-citizens in a controlled space (Agier 2008: 63-64; Chimni 2000: 251-52; 2002; 2009: 20-21; Hyndman 2000: 24; Kibreab 1999: 388). Camps were not originally conceived as places of confinement and violation of rights, but rather as settings that would allow refugees to live in decent and secure conditions, while contributing to the development of areas otherwise sparsely populated and underdeveloped (Harrell-Bond 2000: 3). However, they have become a key device in the exercise of arbitrary power to manage large-scale displacement (Malkki 1995a: 498).

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[19] Interestingly, official statistics on the subject are nearly non-existent, a deficiency that Agier (2008: 60) attributes to the "shameful" nature of the camp as the solution to displacement.

[20] Loescher et al. (2008: 5) consider that security concerns put forward by poor countries receiving large groups of refugees could be more grounded than those of Western countries, a significant influx in border areas being more likely to destabilize the local balance and to trigger tensions. It is worth noting that until recently, large-scale influxes have been regarded from a humanitarian perspective, neglecting the fact that refugees are also independent actors who can participate in conflicts. Recent literature has been more attentive to the relationship between refugees, instability and conflict (Morris and Stedman 2008: 70-71).

2. Studying refugees in camps

The forced displacement of people has been the subject of extensive political and legal research since "the refugee" "emerged as a knowable, nameable figure and as an object of social-scientific knowledge" at the end of World War II (Malkki 1995a: 498). However, refugees only became a relatively popular subject of anthropological research in the 1980s, with the establishment of the first sizeable refugee camps in Africa and Asia. Since then, anthropologists have had a role in analyzing the ideological underpinnings of the legal category of refugees and highlighting the multiplicity of sociological realities it encompasses (Fresia 2007: 100-2). Critical anthropological work on the experience of refugees in camps has notably been achieved by Harrell-Bond (1986, 2000), Harrell-Bond, Voutira and Leopold (1992), Malkki (1995), Horst (2006) and Agier (2005 [2008], 2008). Several researchers have also specifically studied the Kenyan camps. For example, Abdi (2004), Crisp (1999) and Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) focus on conditions in camps, noting the detrimental impacts of encampment and the rights violations that occur in such environments, while underscoring the insecurity that prevails. Kagwanja and Juma (2008) and Milner (2009) study the evolution of Kenya's asylum policy from abdication to a security-focused interventionism, while Hyndman (2000) examines the failures of international humanitarianism and the response to forced migration, drawing on her field work in the Dadaab camps. Montclos and Kagwanja (2000), Jansen (2011) and Oka (2011) have wondered whether Kenyan camps can be considered as cities, while Agier (2008]) explores the Dadaab camps as towns in the making. Horst (2006, 2008) and Grabska (2010) have researched the transnational nature of Dadaab and Kakuma. Otha (2005) has approached Kakuma from the perspective of the host population, the Turkana.

It has been noted that the complexity of the refugee experience has been overlooked in portrayals that have depicted the displaced in turn as passive victims oppressed by humanitarian agencies or, conversely, as strategists with unsuspected resources and adaptability (Fresia 2007: 101, 105-8; Horst 2006: 11-18). However, many recent studies have tried to capture both the constraints experienced by refugees and their agency. Calling on

Foucault's notions of "biopower" and "governmentality,"[21] authors have described camps as spaces of exception that fall outside of state sovereignty, where the humanitarian government composed of NGOs and government agencies, and coordinated and funded by UNHCR, exercises power over bare life (e.g., Agamben 1998: 167-180; Agier 2008: 101-2, 298-302;[22] Fassin and Pandolfi 2010: 15-16; Hyndman 2000: 117-147; Nyers 2006: 39-42; Pandolfi 2002: 43). From this perspective, humanitarian power orders and shapes the lives of refugees, administered as living bodies. Camps, whose spatial organization still reflects the military influence and the disciplinary model that marked their development (Malkki 1995a: 499), leave no space for freedom and invention and confine refugee-victims to biological survival. In such a repressive space, prospects are drastically limited, bodies controlled and rights violated. Yet, many of the same authors have added that, despite the extraordinary and controlling nature of humanitarian governance, the camp cannot be reduced to a place where all exits are hermetically sealed and where the disciplinary mechanism is so precise that refugees are crushed, reduced to their biological functions. First, social organizations are rarely perfectly ordered and controlled (Davis 1992: 159). Then, although the camp is unconducive to emancipation and development, that does not mean that refugees are totally deprived of their imagination and unable to get around the control and power of the institution, at least partially, and regain or retain an identity and political subjectivity (Agier 2008: 234-40; Nyers 2006: 98-102). Forced migration cannot be summed up as belonging to a new legal category, but must instead be considered in terms of experience and a process of rapid social transformation (Malkki 1995a: 496). Arendt (1951 [1968]: 286-87) reflects that a common experience stems from the passage to the status of refugee, and therefore to non-citizen; i.e., to that of exclusion from the world of men. But beyond this "ban," it is reasonable to assume that there is no typical refugee or ideal-type experience, given that the experience of each individual is unique. As Nyers (2006: 24) observes, the assignment of a one-dimensional victim identity to refugees can only be reductive. "Refugee situations should . . . be understood as complex, multidimensional sites of identity practices. Refugee identity is not merely the negative, empty, temporary, and helpless counterpart to the positive, present, permanent, and authoritative citizen." Similarly, depicting refugees as solely dependent on states and international organizations for their protection and/or assistance fails to recognize that they have developed other coping mechanisms, notably through being part of a variety of national and transnational networks. This has been highlighted by a number of relatively recent studies (e.g., Grabska 2010; Hammond 2007; Horst 2006; Jansen 2011; Montclos and Kagwanja 2000; Montclos 2003; Van Hear 2003).

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[21] Foucault (2004) uses the notion of "biopower" to refer to a power that, instead of focusing on the management of territory, focuses on the management of life itself, while "governmentality" refers to the governments' techniques aimed at controlling bodies.

[22] Agamben describes a perfectly ordered generic camp, making no distinction between a concentration camp and a refugee camp. He writes (1998: 174): "[I]f the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crimes that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography. The stadium in Bari into which the Italian police in 1991 provisionally herded all illegal Albanian immigrants before sending them back to their country, the winter cycle-racing track in which the Vichy authorities gathered the Jews before consigning them to the Germans, the *Konzentrationslager für Ausländer* in Cottbus-Sielow in which the Weimar government gathered Jewish refugees from the East, or the *zones d'attente* in French International airports in which foreigners asking for refugee status are detained will then all equally be camps. In all these cases, an apparently innocuous space (for example the Hôtel Arcades in Roissy) actually delimits a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law, but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign." This analysis has been criticized notably by Agier (2008: 272), who shares the view that the camp is a space of exception, but disputes the idea of a perfectly ordered generic camp and of a correspondence between the concentration camp and the refugee camp.

Refugee camps become social and political environments in which people are born, marry and die, places of production of locality where new practices are developed (Appadurai 1996: 192), and not merely sites where biological life is regulated by the humanitarian government. The camp can be described as a locus of control, where "[s]urvival has become the supreme motive for all actions" (Harrell-Bond 1986: 104). Yet, "on fait partout le constat que si l'espace vécu des réfugiés est *a priori* un *hors-lieux* et un *vide*, au plan sociologique et politique il se remplit de relations" (Agier 2008: 233). Hence, camps can be construed as places of confinement where freedom is restricted and where individuals are treated as victims, but also as spaces of (re)invention and (re)definition, connected to the world. Refugees therefore navigate between the state of victim and that of subject, between control and (sometimes creative) avoidance strategies. In that respect, I find Vigh's concept of "social navigation" (2006: 13-15) profoundly valuable, as it allows one to take into account not only people's agency, but also the fact that social forces are at play, and thus people are neither perfectly free agents nor merely powerless victims. Vigh (2006: 32) underlines that the circumstances and limitations of the terrain being navigated influence people's possibilities and their understanding of their possibilities, which, in turn, affects their social navigation.

In short, the emergence of the camp as a standard response to displacement must be understood as a result of the will to contain undesirable populations. The camp itself and the experience of refugees must be considered through this prism, but without overlooking the fact that people are not mere undifferentiated victims. They navigate their social world, steering more or less successfully between constraints and opportunities. Although refugees living in the same setting may experience similar restrictions, these might not affect people's navigation in the same way, as people's paths are unique, influenced by their history, their gender and their capacities.

3. Aim and rationale of the research

To some extent, this project is the fruit of years of humanitarian work with refugees in Africa, mostly in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, years spent wishing that the response to refugee movements were more adequate and wondering about the obvious discrepancy between theory and practice. When I embarked upon this ethnographic research, I wanted to explore holistically the impact of containment policies, which have turned the camp into a long-term response, on a specific group of people: refugee youth who have spent most or all of their lives in a camp. My main focus was on people's perception of their experience in a camp and not the humanitarian system itself. Powerful critiques of the failures of the humanitarian response in camps and of UNHCR as a protection-mandated organization have already been proposed by several authors, including Agier (2005 [2008], 2008), Harrell-Bond (1986, 2002), Hyndman (2000), Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) and Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995).

I wanted to understand how youth who grew up in Kakuma experience their living environment and how this experience structures their view of the past and their country of origin, as well as of the future and its possibilities. I was interested in themes related to daily life in the camp and to the role and representation of refugees. I wondered how they perceived themselves in relation to the wider world, faced with a "rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations" (Appadurai 1996: 4), while the past as a resource for one's identification and identity (Baussant 2007: 393) is potentially undermined by exile. I wondered how youth saw their lives evolving in the future, knowing that their ability to study, work or travel legally is limited. As an extension of these questions, I also pondered about what happens once people leave the camp. Concerns about dependency and inability to look after themselves and face the real world have been raised with regard to refugees who have lived in camps for extended periods of time. My aim was to loosely examine three interrelated spaces in time and the way they are perceived, understood and described by refugee youth: the lived present, the imagined past, and the projected future.

Underlying this undertaking was the belief that regardless of the considerable limitations they face, refugees are the ones defining their lives and giving meaning to their own situation and circumstances. I therefore intended to engage with the experience of refugees in a way that recognizes the agency of these social actors. I also sought to resituate their individual trajectories in a broader context that extends beyond the humanitarian system and encompasses transnational networks.

3.1 Rationale for the research

Refugee-related research has commonly focused on young children and adults, neglecting youth as a distinct social group.[23] This could be because those younger than 18 are often subsumed under the broad international legal category of children, while young people over 18 are counted as adults. While several relatively recent studies have been dedicated to the subject, they have mostly been from a psychological or psychiatric perspective, typically studying trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (Chatty 2010: 321; e.g., Boothby 1992; Farwell 2001; Goodman 2004; Halcón et al. 2004; Murray et al. 2008; Sack et al. 1998). The camp experience has rarely been studied from the viewpoint of refugee youth who spent most of their lives in such closed settings. The anthropologist Dawn Chatty is a noteworthy exception, as she carried out studies focussing on Palestinian youth, and then on Sahrawi youth (Chatty and Hundt 2005; Chatty 2010, 2010a). In 1999, a participatory qualitative research programme on Palestinian youth was established at the Refugee Studies Centre of the

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[23] I discuss the definition of youth in the next chapter.

University of Oxford. It examined the experience of youth, aged 8 to 18, living both within and outside camps in five different settings in the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) (Chatty and Hundt 2005; Chatty 2010). In 2002, a new three-year study was launched among Afghan refugee youth in Tehran and Mashhad, Iran, as well as Sahrawi refugee youth living in isolated camps in Western Algeria (Chatty 2010a). Research with Palestinian youth living in various locations shows that while their main concerns are similar, relating to life experience and agency, and to educational constraints and aspirations (Chatty 2010: 321),[24] the particular historical, political and economical contexts have significantly coloured their experiences in each site (2010: 336). Chatty and Hundt (2005: 7) also stress that in all locations, the experience of girls differs from that of boys "in terms of exposure, opportunities, constraints and responsibilities within the household and the community" and that the older generation's experience of displacement has an impact on young people. Writing about Sahrawi and Afghan refugees, Chatty (2010a: 28-29) identifies four key areas as particularly significant: "multiple or contested identification with places and spaces; opportunism and agency associated to gender discrimination and education; resilience and optimism expressed through further migration, and transnational networking in the face of poverty and limited political expression."

As will become evident throughout this thesis, these observations are equally significant when discussing and studying the experience of Somali youth who grew up in the Kakuma refugee camp, which has not been researched before. Their experience is gendered and influenced by their living environment, their identity and sense of belonging is complex, immense value is vested in education, and youth nurture great ambitions and show a remarkable resilience and optimism.

Although there are resemblances between the situation of Somalis and Afghan, Palestinian or Sahrawi refugees – they all are in protracted displacement and are predominantly Muslims (Chatty 2007: 271) – there are also contextual, historical and socio-cultural differences. For example, not all of the refugees involved in the aforementioned studies reside in camps nor do they have the same legal status, which has an impact on people (un)settledness. The Afghans lived in urban settings in Iran (Tehran, Mashhad, Qom) and only some of the Palestinians were settled in camps. As opposed to Afghans, Sahrawis and Palestinians, Somali refugees in Kenya have been and still are part of a sizeable resettlement programme to the United States (see Chap. 6, 1.1.1), which influences their camp experience and their ambitions for the future. In contrast to what I observed concerning the Somalis, the involvement of Palestinian and Sahrawi refugees in national liberation struggles affects their views on resettlement, local integration and return, and turns camps into spaces of collective mobilization (Farah 2009). In some locations, refugees have the right to work, settle outside of camps or move freely, which is not the case for Somalis in Kakuma.

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[24] Comparable concerns were expressed by displaced and refugee youth from Somalia whom I interviewed during photography teaching workshops (Grayson 2009).

3.2 Main observations

My research shows that although camps, from the perspective of Somali youth, are not a good response to lasting displacement, they also believe that being in Kakuma has saved their lives. It has allowed them to grow up in a safer environment than they would have in Somalia. Growing up, the camp may not have always felt like a safe environment, but it did feel like a normal one since, unlike their parents, they had never known any other. Until they completed their education, children and teenagers were busy with school, and had little time to wonder about their future and the "normality" of the camp.

Frustration, fuelled by connection to and awareness of the rest of the world, grows when education opportunities are exhausted and chances for leaving through resettlement remain vague, while at the same time many of their friends have been resettled to the United States. Although youth are better able than their parents to navigate the humanitarian system and Kenya itself, they still manage to gain only limited financial autonomy, making it hard to honour certain traditions and social responsibilities. While this might contribute to a renegotiation of traditions (Harrell-Bond 1986: 293), it also catalyses young people's will to leave the camp and "find a life."

Furthermore, growing up coincides with a greater awareness of the representation attached to being a refugee. Even though youth do not see themselves as lesser human beings, they believe they are perceived as people of little value, with limited or no rights, who cannot be trusted. Such feelings reinforce their determination to leave Kakuma. Despite the fact that refugees have been living there since the early 1990s, the camp remains a *lieu de passage*: no one plans to spend their lives there, although youth who grew up in the camp often say that "Kakuma is home." While satisfactory ways out are few, refugees do move, make plans and build their lives beyond the humanitarian system. Resettlement is the exit solution usually hoped for, but the process is lengthy, so youth often look for other temporary avenues. Those rejected for resettlement sometimes remain in the camp with growing levels of resentment, while others move by their own means and irregularly to Kenyan cities or to another country. Some might return to Somalia. During my stay in Kakuma, I bade farewell to refugees moving to Nairobi's Somali neighbourhood to work. I also met people who were returning to Somalia to assess the situation, and I heard of people heading to Libya and South Africa. I also saw a few leaving for the United States and Canada through resettlement programmes.

As I mentioned earlier, the camp experience appears to be traversed by tensions between seemingly opposite notions – such as mobility and immobility, isolation and connection, locality and globality, victimization and the affirmation of the subject, control and circumvention, fixed space and space of reinvention, citizenship and refugeeness – and conflicting temporalities. At first glance, Kakuma feels disconnected, largely because, like many other camps, it is established in a remote and sparsely populated border area with barren land. But this impression quickly gains layers of complexity: while distant, the camp is also in intense interaction with the wider world, an interaction that shapes the experience of refugees. Refugees cultivate relationships with people who have remained in their country of origin and others who have moved elsewhere. They are also in contact with merchants and aid workers from across Kenya and around the world. The media expose them to what is happening elsewhere, and policy decisions taken around the globe affect their daily lives. The camp may be geographically isolated, but it is also a connected place that is in constant motion. Mobility is actually the only way to accept and make sense of the camp's reality. Seen from this perspective, the camp becomes an endless passage in a difficult location, on an (imagined) trajectory that takes refugees from Somalia to the West. This value placed on movement can be linked to the Somali tradition of resilient nomadism and mobility. It is only by seeing it against this background that the camp becomes tolerable. To some extent, the camp can be regarded as a place of confinement that paradoxically induces movement.

Seemingly contradictory temporalities also coexist in the camp. People wait endlessly for a hypothetical resettlement, which gives the impression that time has stopped. Social time – which would normally command refugees to get married, settle down, have children, find a job – is chaotic, because accumulating sufficient resources to establish oneself is hard. The feeling of living in suspended time makes it difficult to plan for the future, but as biological time passes, some marry and establish families. Many camp dwellers speak of the tension between the primacy of waiting, chronic uncertainty and the passage of time that means that they are getting older (see Griffiths 2014). A temporal tension is also perceptible in the transitory yet permanent nature of the camp. Although refugees have been living there for decades, imbuing it with a feeling of permanency, people's experience reflects the fact that the camp is designed for temporary rather than permanent settlement. In such a setting, subtle identity and cultural changes occur. The younger generation is questioning tribalism and young women are increasingly open in criticizing their social role. This creates tensions between generations and between genders. The camp becomes a site of social, political and historical (trans)formation. Perceived as such, exile, even in a camp, can be considered productive and emancipating, as long as the camp is used properly and remains impermanent.

Such observations do not justify the confinement of refugees, but rather highlight the fact that the camp cannot be considered only as a space of immobility and constraints, but must be approached as an ambiguous place, traversed and shaped by tensions. These tensions constitute the fabric of this ethnography.

4. Organization of the thesis

This ethnography attempts to capture the complexity of the experience of Somali youth who have grown up in the Kakuma refugee camp. Throughout the thesis, I regularly try to step back from the camp to view it in a broader political landscape. In other words, I navigate between the lived experience of the camp and the effects of global containment policies on people's lives. Studying refugee- and mobility-related questions is not without risk, since the more migration mechanisms are portrayed and understood, the more tailored and strict measures and policies to control refugees' movements may become. I hope to mitigate such risks by presenting the complexity of refugees' experience and their situation in a nuanced way.

In this introduction, I have approached Kakuma by examining how the motivation of containing certain populations has made the opening of camps the usual response to mass displacement. I present and discuss my methodology in Chapter 1. Subsequent chapters are organized in chronological order. They look at youth's perspectives on their past, their present and their future, and include sections devoted to themes that weigh heavily in their experience, such as trust, representation and alterations to cultural identity. Chapter 2 considers young people's accounts of the collapse of Somalia and their families' past, which seem to help them cope with the present and justify their aspirations for the future. In Chapter 3, I recount their arrival in Kakuma in the late 1990s and examine how the early days of the camp have been turned into a foundational story that has contributed to the formation of a sense of community.

The following three chapters focus on young people's lives in the camp. I first reflect on what it means to grow up in such a setting, then examine how this has affected their cultural identity and finally discuss the camp's connectedness to other spaces and places. I note that the end of education coincides with an increased resentment towards the camp. I then consider how living in a culturally diverse environment stimulates changes to gender dynamics, social structures and roles. In regard to the camp's connectedness to the outside world, I argue that refugees' constant interaction with people around the globe, coupled with their awareness of their condition, is central to the experience of the camp. This consciousness is a source of frustration, but can also motivate action by making Kakuma an even less acceptable setting, one that can only be temporary.

In chapters 7 and 8, I study two related notions: (mis)trust and representation. I first explore why trust between refugees and the humanitarian system is lacking. Mistrust is connected to the representation of refugees in ways that are difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, they are deemed untrustworthy because of their capacity to cheat the system. On the other, they are depicted as powerless victims who cannot be treated as equals. Chapter 8 takes a broader look at young people's self-representation, which is not congruent with the typical refugee representation. However, the latter depiction carries weight in the camp, where they are considered above all as refugees.

Chapter 9 looks to the future. Although youth's ambitions vary, most believe that to achieve their dreams, they must be resettled in America. Few hope to move to Somalia, and formal local integration in Kenya is unlikely. This chapter is followed by a short note on life after the camp, based on interviews with people who used to live in Kenyan camps but no longer do. The conclusion sums up the findings of this thesis, focusing on points of tension in the camp experience.

Each chapter pursues its own line of questioning and its own particular logic, but several themes also run through the thesis. These include the tension between victimhood and agency, the role of narratives in structuring people's experience, the camp's connection to the wider world and the importance of mobility in a rather immobile setting. Some repetition is inevitable, as certain factors impinge upon people's experience at many different levels.

Chapter 1 - Approaching the experience of Somali youth in Kakuma: Methodological considerations

At the core of this research lies the desire to grasp the subjective experience of a specific group of people, Somali refugee youth who grew up in a particular context, Kakuma Camp, and to convey their perspectives and interpretations of their own experience and how it has been coloured by the camp and their families' forced migration. In particular, such an endeavour entails examining people's perceptions of their daily reality, past and future, and their view of changes to cultural identity and alterations to social roles and institutions as a result of their exile and dwelling in a camp.

I had initially planned to do my fieldwork in Dadaab, but the increasing insecurity there led me to reconsider.[25] I assessed the possibility of pursuing my research in the Jijiga camps in Ethiopia, but realized that most long-term Somali refugees there would soon be resettled. After visiting Dadaab again and confirming that it would be difficult to conduct in-depth research in such a setting, I finally opted for Kakuma. With over 100,000 inhabitants, Kakuma is smaller than Dadaab,[26] but still large. In contrast to Dadaab, where nearly the entire population is Somali, Kakuma's inhabitants come from over a dozen countries. When I was there, Somalis were the largest national group, followed by South Sudanese. Smaller numbers of refugees came from the Great Lakes region, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan (UNHCR 2012; see Chap. 3, 1.1).

While I had spent significant periods of time in Dadaab as an aid worker, I had only been to Kakuma once, in August 2012, while researching durable solutions for Somalis living in camps in the region for the Danish and the Norwegian refugee councils (Grayson et al. 2013). This visit helped me to ascertain that I would feel comfortable living and conducting research there and allowed me to start establishing contacts. I returned to Kakuma in October 2012 and stayed for the following six months.

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[25] In October 2011, two logisticians working for Médecins Sans Frontières in Dadaab were abducted, which prompted the adoption of stricter security rules in the camp (BBC News, 14 Oct. 2011). This did not prevent the abduction of four international staff members of the Norwegian Refugee Council in June 2012 (Al Jazeera, 29 June 2012). The latter incident led to even more restrictive security guidelines and made in-depth and prolonged fieldwork difficult to envisage.

[26] In late 2012, some 474,000 refugees were living in Dadaab (UNHCR 2012e).

This chapter presents some reflections on researching the experience of being a young person in a refugee camp, a kind of space that has already been examined from many angles. I start out by defining what experience is and how it can be captured, and reflecting on who exactly falls into the category of "youth." I then consider who the youth are in the context of my study and discuss how I engaged with them and their reality. I conclude with a few remarks on power, reciprocity and recognition.

1. Defining experience and youth

Throop (2003), drawing on the phenomenological perspectives of James, Husserl and Schutz, suggests that personal experience is structured by the sensory experience of the present in its raw state and its reflective and narrative retrospective analysis. The structure of experience is constantly altered by the entanglement of a reflective narration of the past and a "temporal flux of a sensuous matter" (Throop 2003: 231, citing Levinas 1998: 143). It is not necessarily consistent; it "encompasses the indeterminate, the fluid, the incoherent, the internal, the disjunctive, the fragmentary, the coherent, the intersubjective, the determinate, the rigid, the external, the cohesive, the conjunctive and the unitary" (Throop 2003: 227). Experience is structured in its relationship to the present, the past and its narration, and the projected future. Although it is subjective, it cannot ignore the objectively given; it interacts with and is influenced in variable ways by people's gender, age, history and socialization (Colson 1999: 37; Essed et al. 2004: 2). Capturing experience thus entails paying attention to immediate direct sensory perception and its mediated reflection, and the relationship between the two (Throop 2003a: 379).

Who exactly are youth? Definitions vary greatly. In Western contexts, definitions of youth are usually relatively narrow and age-based. In other parts of the world, including Africa, "youth-hood" tends to be related to a stage of life rather than a particular age range, although official documents may still refer to an age bracket (Sommers 2001: 3). The United Nations defines youth as persons between 15 and 24, while the African Union includes those aged 15 to 35 (UNDESA 2007: 80). In the Kenyan Constitution (2010) youth are 18 to 35 (art. 260 § q), whereas Kenyan youth policy targets 15 to 30-year-olds (GoK 2002: 1.1). Such inconsistency "reflects the difficulties that most African societies have in specifying the age bracket of youth" (Muthee 2010: 5). Youth as a life stage is understood as the passage between childhood and adulthood, a period of distancing from the family and the school environment, "a time of experimentation with identities, autonomy and attitudes" (Barry 2005: 99), a period in which one goes from dependence to independence, when fundamental decisions are made and new roles and responsibilities taken on (Lloyd et al. 2006: 1). In the Western model of child development, the pathway to adulthood is conceived of as linear and consists in the transition from education to work, from living with parents to living away from them and establishing a family (Coles 1995: 8). Childhood and youth are defined by opposition to adulthood, perceived as "a state of becoming rather than as a legitimate state of being-in-and-for-the-world" (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998: 13). Such a linear view of development, with a clear point of arrival, does not reflect the global reality (Barry 2005: 6; Chatty 2005: 6). In environments where young people have to take on "adult" responsibilities, the divide between childhood and adulthood is easily blurred. Moreover, "[i]n many cultures, the social stage of being a youth is much longer for young males than young females. If, for example, a society defines the 'youth' as the period between childhood and marriage, it may be a very short period for girls who marry young" (Sommers 2001: 3). Hence, youth is a fluid category, whose nature and length varies "across and within societies and cultures over time" (Honwana and De Boeck 2005: 4). Its definition can only be "contextual, depending on the social, cultural, political and economic environment" (Muthee 2010: 5).

Understanding the experience of youth thus entails defining who are Somali youth in the context of Kakuma, combining retrospective assessments by young people themselves – in this case in the form of interviews or questionnaires – with a systematic observation of daily life that "focuses upon capturing the often pre-reflective, real-time unfolding of social action" (Throop 2003: 235).

2. Adjusting the lens

In my first weeks in the camp, I pondered about who would be at the centre of my research. Before arriving in Kakuma, I had assumed that I would engage with people aged 14 to 20, as I believed they would be in their transitional period to adulthood. But just as I ended up changing the setting, switching from Dadaab to Kakuma, I shifted my focus to slightly older people and broadened my focus in terms of age.

2.1 Youth in Kakuma

When I started meeting with young Somalis in Kakuma, I noticed that they only began to define and consider themselves as youth in their late teens – and people in their thirties often still spoke of themselves as youth and were involved with youth groups. I came to realize that most of those who were still busy with school, especially primary school, were not yet openly engaged in reflection about their future or, if they were, would not readily share their thoughts on the subject. Refugees typically complete their basic education at a later age than students who start at the standard age and have never had to interrupt their studies. Someone in his or her late teens might still be in primary school (see Chap. 4, 2.1). Often the emergence of a reflexive stance seemed linked to the approach of the end of schooling. This generally happened later for boys than for girls. Indeed, while many boys have a relatively long passage from "childhood" to "adulthood," many girls leave school and assume adult responsibilities at an early age and without much transitional time, owing to marriage and motherhood. For example, one of the women I interviewed was married when she was 14 and still in primary school. She left school and by the time she was 17, had three children. Yet other girls are negotiating postponement of marriage until an older age, often by prolonging their studies or working. For boys, coming of age is complicated by their lack of financial means to pay a dowry and create a home for the family. In fact, the camp appears to blur categories and life paths. While an 18-year-old working for an NGO for a small monetary incentive might be the main source of income for his family, he may nonetheless remain unable to marry in the absence of a proper job. Such constraints may not be particular to the camp. Honwana and De Boeck (2005: 9) stress that "a growing number of children and youth in contemporary Africa are excluded from education, health-care, salaried jobs, and even access to an adult status, given their financial incapacity to construct a house, formally marry and raise children."

In the end, I focused on people who, in addition to having lived in Kenyan camps from an early age (generally before the age of 5), defined and perceived themselves as youth. Nearly all were in their late teens or early twenties, from 16 to 26. I included a few older people: two people aged 28, one aged 31 and one 32. The two oldest were youth group leaders. Those aged 28 arrived in Kenya when they were 7 and 8, and thus had little recollection of their life in Somalia. Most of the group had spent time in the coastal camps before being transferred to Kakuma. A few already had children and were no longer living with their parents. Most still had limited responsibilities and were at a turning point, trying to make the right decisions for their future and hoping to become independent from their families and take on adult roles. Within their families, they were no longer treated like children, but were not seen as fully adult. People who had grown up in the camp who had different experiences and were at different stages of their life were thus considered together in my research, as they shared the feeling of belonging to the social category of youth and not yet seeing themselves as full adults.

2.2 Numbers matter

Although statistics in refugee camps are far from perfectly accurate, they can be used as an indicator of the proportion of youth between 16 and 26 who were born in the camp or arrived at a young age.[27] In March 2013, the UNHCR statistics showed that about 23,000 youth living in Kakuma, or a fifth of the camp's population, were born between 1987 and 1997, and thus were between 16 and 26 years of age. Somalis accounted for 58 percent of that number. Few Somalis in that age group were born in Kakuma (59), as most had arrived when the Mombasa camps closed in 1997 and 1998 (see Chap. 2, 2.2). About 1,780 of them arrived in Kakuma before the age of six, which amounts to less than 15 percent of Somali youth in the camp who were between 16 and 26 years of age. Nearly a fifth of 16- to 26-year old Somalis (about 2,600) were under ten when they arrived. (All nationalities included, less than four percent of the youth born between 1987 and 1997 were born in the camp: see figures in Appendix 1.) It is very likely that a large majority did spend most of their lives in camps, having first lived in the coastal camps and then in Kakuma from the late 1990s. A few also arrived from Dadaab. According to UNHCR, less than a quarter of the 12,082 Somalis who were in the camp in or before 2000 were still officially registered at the time of my fieldwork. It is probable that the proportion of those who were no longer in the camp was even higher, as refugees who leave by their own means are unlikely to inform UNHCR or the government of their departure.

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[27] Population data is normally updated and verified through periodical re-registration. This operation is also referred to as a "verification." I use both terms in the rest of this thesis. The last verification of demographic data, before I began my fieldwork, took place from Oct. 2010 to April 2011. Between these periodic verifications, changes occur within the population and might not be reported. Refugees have limited interest in reporting deaths, as it means that their family size will be reduced, which affects the size of their food ration. In addition, registration figures do not take into account the mobility of refugees and include a number of local residents who register as refugees to receive some assistance (Crisp 1999a: 7).

3. About looking[28]

Once on site, how does one go about capturing people's experience, embracing a holistic perspective? How does one manage to recognize the uniqueness of the situation without overlooking the ordinariness of daily life? As Bakewell (2007: 8) warns, "[i]t is too easy to draw on the fact that someone has experienced forced migration as an explanation for many observations in the field, which may equally apply to non-refugees." At several points in this ethnography I remark that some of the experience of young people growing up in camps is common to other young people in Africa as well. However, the status of refugee adds a layer of constraints, while possibly bringing opportunities by giving access to at least basic education, resettlement and scholarships.

In this research project, I tried to consider the complexity of people's experience within their social and cultural context, within their visible networks in the camp, but also beyond Kakuma. I aspired both to situate people's experience in wider spaces of socialization and to understand it at a micro-level. More prosaically, I worked through a combination of participant observation, teaching (journalism and photography classes), and in-depth interviews with refugees and other relevant individuals, with the aim of capturing people's immediate experience and their reflections about it. In the following section, I present and discuss my methodology.

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[28] From the title of John Berger's book (1980).

3.1 Watching life as it happens

To capture people's experience, I spent a lot of time simply being present in the camp, carrying out participant observation in a number of public areas, mostly in Kakuma I and II where most of the old Somali community lives (the camp is divided into four parts: see Chap. 3). From the start, I knew I could neither observe nor participate in the life of refugees in an uninterrupted manner, as living in the camp was not an option. Camps tend not to be a setting in which a researcher can easily live for extended periods of time. In this case, the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) forbids visits to the camp after dark for security reasons (although I believe I could have safely spent nights in a family compound). I could have opted to stay in one of the private guesthouses in the nearby town, but chose instead to "embed" with a relatively small NGO, FilmAid,[29] and to live in the NGO compound with hundreds of aid workers hired by various organizations that are present in the camp. This arrangement made me feel safer. Nonetheless, I knew that being hosted by an organization would colour the way I was perceived by refugees. (I further reflect on this in the conclusion of this chapter.)

I went to the camp every day, except on a few occasions when I had several interviews scheduled outside the camp or was sick. I often went for walks in the camp, spent time in the public markets, and visited the main hospital, some schools and training centres, one of the field posts and a food distribution centre. I regularly visited people whom I had come to know in the Somali market and sometimes accompanied youth while they took part in various activities, such as literacy classes they were organizing, film screenings, training sessions and food collection. If I was going to nearby areas, I usually walked, as that allowed me to meet people in an informal way. After a few months, I inevitably ran into people I knew whenever I was walking. Otherwise, I moved around by taxi-bicycle or *bodaboda* (a taxi-motorcycle) or was dropped off by the FilmAid car.

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[29] FilmAid produces and distributes film and media to deliver information and entertainment to communities in crisis and trains community members in video production (www.filmaid.org). Its head office is in the U.S. and it runs operations in five countries. In 2012, less than ten Kenyan staff and many more refugee workers made up the FilmAid team in Kakuma.

When I first arrived in the camp, I encountered a number of people to whom I explained what I was interested in and asked if they knew anyone I should meet. I used several entry points in making contacts. I first spoke with refugees I had become acquainted with during my previous trip, as well as those working for FilmAid and other NGOs. I gradually met some youth who had spent most of their lives in the camp, who in turn introduced me to other young people they had grown up with and to people they saw as influential in their community. I also came to know several young people through the classes I was giving, and they introduced me to more people, many of them out of school. At a later stage, youth leaders and community leaders introduced me to still more young people.

Quite soon I was being referred to people I had already met, and thus I realized in the early stages of my research that most of those who had grown up in the camp and still lived there were part of a relatively small group of persons who all knew one another. Over time, I ended up developing relatively close relationships with a number of young people who introduced me to various aspects of their lives. In addition to attending some social gatherings, I spent a lot of time drinking tea, being taught how to cook Somali *injera*,[30] going for walks and talking of this and that. I also attended some meetings of the Union of Somali Youth, one of the three Somali community-based youth organizations in the camp, and adult education classes they were organizing. It would be incorrect to say that I thoroughly selected key informants. It is more that in a number of cases, they were people with whom I easily engaged, who were curious about what I was doing, and with whom I developed relationships, some of which continue even now that I have returned to Canada, through phone calls and social media. Nonetheless, I did strive to ensure that I was spending time with people of diverse backgrounds and social characteristics such as gender, age, clan affiliation and occupation.

I paid attention to interactions and social dynamics among youth, as well as with other members of the community, teachers, humanitarian workers and representatives of the authorities. I considered how people filled their days and observed the social, financial and domestic responsibilities that youth were assuming. This relatively unstructured time in the camp allowed me to be a witness of daily life, of life as it happens. People shared small pieces of information that they did not necessarily see as worth mentioning in an interview, such as their daily chores or feelings of boredom, whom they liked spending time with and where, or where they would go for dating. In the course of informal interactions inconsistencies in people's stories often became clear, either through their actions or as they altered (or contradicted) stories they had previously told me. It was also mainly by simply being there that I met the people I ended up interviewing.

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[30] *Injera or canjeero*, a Somali staple and most common breakfast food, is a pancake-like bread made from a fermented mixture of wheat flour and water.

I integrated photo-taking into my participant observation, as I worked on a series of individual and family portraits (see Chap. 8). I offered to snap and print family portraits for people with whom I had developed fairly close relationships. I also took individual portraits of my photography students. My intention was to see how distant people's desired representation would be from the typical miserabiliste imagery of refugees (Rajaram 2002). This allowed me to verify something I had expected: that people would not present themselves as victims, but would want to look the best they could.

3.2 Participatory research methods: Teaching photography and journalism

In addition to participant observation, I wanted to experiment with participatory approaches. This was partly for reasons of reciprocity, but also because I believed it would help me establish sustained relationships, and that refugees were in a privileged position to identify matters of interest and give meaning to findings (Boyden 2000; Cooper 2005: 463; Horst 2001: 10-11). When Cindy Horst did her Ph.D. research in Dadaab, she noticed that refugees developed their own methods, asked different questions and approached people (and problems) in a way that was different from her own. They contributed data that she would not have found herself and questioned some of her findings (2001: 14). I found this inspiring and planned to involve the "researched" – the youth – in designing research questions and methods, interviewing people, and discussing findings and their interpretation. I also intended to offer a community-based photography class.

In the end, the involvement of youth took different forms. Many accompanied and assisted my reflection by informally discussing with me the topic of my research and how to approach it. Some also helped me identify people to meet with. When I interviewed older people in the community to whom I had been introduced by a youth, either because they were the youth's parents or someone he or she deemed worthy of attention, the youth would sometimes accompany me, but not always, depending on the matters to be discussed and the views of the youth and the interviewee. Young people sometimes felt that to show their respect, they should not attend interviews with elders unless translation was required, but this was not always the case. When they came along, I included them in the interview, asking if they wanted to make comments or ask questions. Once it was over, we usually reflected together on what had been said. I shared my impressions and conclusions with many, asking for their input. During the writing of this thesis, I have also shared completed chapters with a number of them. I decided to write this thesis in English, rather than in French, my mother tongue, so that Somalis would be able to read it and comment on it. Those who did send feedback had usually paid very close attention to parts that felt close to them and often commented on how reading their stories told by someone else had been moving and stimulating. I gave an unplanned journalism class for a month and a half, in addition to a planned three-month photography and writing class. Horst's observation matches my experience in that the active involvement of youth influenced my understanding of their reality. This is not to say that insiders always know better than outsiders, but that insiders can play a role in designing better research questions and analyzing and interpreting findings (Temple and Moran 2006: 10).

In the next pages, I provide details on the photography and journalism classes that I gave and reflect on their relevance and usefulness as research methods.

3.2.1 Journalism class

After arriving in Kakuma, I was asked by FilmAid to develop a curriculum for a journalism course and to start the class while they were recruiting a teacher. (As a journalism graduate, I worked as a journalist for the Canadian public radio broadcaster, Radio-Canada, before becoming a humanitarian worker.) I agreed, in part because FilmAid was giving me valuable support, but also because I thought that teaching journalism would contribute to my understanding of the camp. For a month and a half, I gave bi-weekly classes to some 14 students, aged 19 to 29, from Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Uganda. Most had completed secondary school. A few, including three Somalis, had only finished primary school. It turned out that half of them had spent most of their lives in the camp; of these, four were Somalis. The latter assisted me with my own research by sharing thoughts about their lives in Kakuma, offering their views on the camp and its social organization, and answering my numerous questions about their experience. Other students had “only” been in Kakuma for a few years. One had arrived less than six months before.

I regularly asked students to come up with ideas for articles, which gave me valuable insight into their interests and concerns, and what they felt were important stories to tell about Kakuma. This fed into my own research. They commonly suggested topics related to security, coexistence between various nationalities, early marriage and the situation of women, the unsatisfactory provision of water and food or access to medical care, the poor condition of roads, camp politics and corruption, and problems related to governance and humanitarian structures. Stories on human smuggling and literacy classes were also suggested. When it came to researching and writing articles, students worried about creating trouble for themselves with the camp management and administration if they were to ask sensitive questions. They often voiced concerns for their security and feared they might lose resettlement opportunities if they were to write anything critical about UNHCR or the authorities. Interestingly, they often stressed that they were comfortable discussing those subjects in class because I was white. While I felt that being white created a barrier, and that it could prevent people from talking in-depth about their survival strategies or certain topics deemed sensitive or alter people’s perception of my influence on aid organizations, I also realized that in some instances, people were able to articulate fears and uneasiness because I was seen as too distant from their reality to constitute a threat. This brings to mind the Indian anthropologist Palriwala who, reflecting on her work in the Netherlands, writes that her outsiderness was an advantage because “many informants felt confident that what they had told me would not filter back into their lives” (2005: 166).

Classes allowed me to witness interactions between students of various nationalities and to notice how they described their respective cultural practices to one another. The fact that refugees have different levels of wealth was very apparent. One student had a computer, while another did not have access to a phone or a radio. In general, newer refugees seemed poorer. Some had never used a computer and most had very limited computer literacy. Working with the students and reviewing their articles, in addition to realizing that their written English was surprisingly weak given their level of education, I noticed that they did not know why they were given international protection. I ended up devoting a class to an introduction to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1969 OAU Convention and the Kenya Refugee Act of 2006, as I felt that some basic understanding of legal frameworks was essential to accurate reporting of camp news and issues. This led to interesting discussions about why they were in the camp and how they perceived asylum.

3.2.2 Photography class

Before arriving in Kakuma, I had decided to teach community-based photography combined with non-fiction writing, using the classes as a research tool. I found Wendy Ewald's photography work with children very inspiring, and previous experiences in the Dadaab camps and several other settlements of displaced Somalis in both Somalia and Yemen had convinced me that such an approach can help establish a lasting dialogue with people who might otherwise be difficult to engage with (Ewald 2001; Ewald et al. 2012; Grayson 2007 and 2009). In addition, the photographs themselves sometimes facilitate discussion and exploration by revealing scenes of everyday life that are rarely seen by an external observer.

After consulting several young people and aid workers, I decided to hold the classes in the secondary school rather than in one of the community centres. I had become aware that if I wanted to see the students several days a week, it would be easier to meet them at school. I organized the classes with the help of the deputy director of Kakuma Secondary School, one of the two secondary schools in the camp. They took place from January to the end of March 2013. Based on the advice of the school director and students, I worked with Form 2 students because the older groups (Form 3 and 4) would be busy preparing their exams while the Form 1 students had not yet been registered.[31] Form 2 students who have studied in an uninterrupted manner are aged 15 or 16. However, as mentioned earlier, most students in the camp are older than the standard age.

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[31] The Kenyan education system includes 8 years of primary school (Standard 1 to 8), followed by four years of secondary school (Form 1 to 4). Children start primary school at age 6 or 7.

In early January 2013, I attended the first day of the school term to explain my project to the students. In the end, however, I had to postpone recruitment to the following week, as a significant number of students did not show up for the first week of school. Many had left the camp for the end-of-year holidays and were not yet back (on the mobility of refugees, see Chap. 6). The following week, students were in school. I outlined my research project and presented details of the course I wanted to offer. I explained that I was looking for eight girls and eight boys who had either been born in a refugee camp in Kenya or had arrived in Kakuma before the age of five, were interested in taking photography and non-fiction writing classes, and were available for afternoon classes twice a week.

Over 60 students expressed their interest. The vast majority were southern Sudanese[32] boys. Four Somali girls, two Somali boys and two Ethiopian boys were also among the volunteers. We discussed the project again, in more detail, as well as their motivation. Given my focus on the experience of Somali youth, I kept the Somali volunteers. We then drew lots to select another four girls and six boys. The 16 selected students were aged between 15 and 21.[33] Nine were South Sudanese, six Somali and one Ethiopian. Five of the Somalis were born in the Mombasa camps and one South Sudanese was born in Kakuma. The others were born in their country of origin and arrived in Kenya before they were five.

Together we agreed on the course schedule and decided to separate boys and girls. Even though classes are mixed in the secondary school, girls said that they would be more at ease to express themselves and speak of their daily reality, their future and their families in non-mixed classes – boys felt no need for such a separation. Upon entering the class, Somali girls often removed a part of their veil, keeping only their headscarf. We only held mixed classes at the very end, to prepare our final exhibition, which allowed me to observe interactions between the young men and women.

I met with each group twice a week during the last period of their school day, from 3 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., in the science laboratory. In the beginning, students attended a short theoretical and practical training session. Once this was completed, one weekly class was dedicated to a discussion and writing exercise for the upcoming photography assignment, while the second consisted in presenting the photographs taken by the students. We agreed on themes to explore at the beginning of the classes. They included family, home, self-representation, daily life, dreams for the future and negative aspects of the camp. We worked with eight point-and-shoot cameras, each shared by two students. For each exercise, students picked one picture to print (I had a portable printer) and prepared an accompanying text. These were turned into individual photo albums. Below are two examples of their work (for more, see Appendix 3. Pictures are also included in various chapters).

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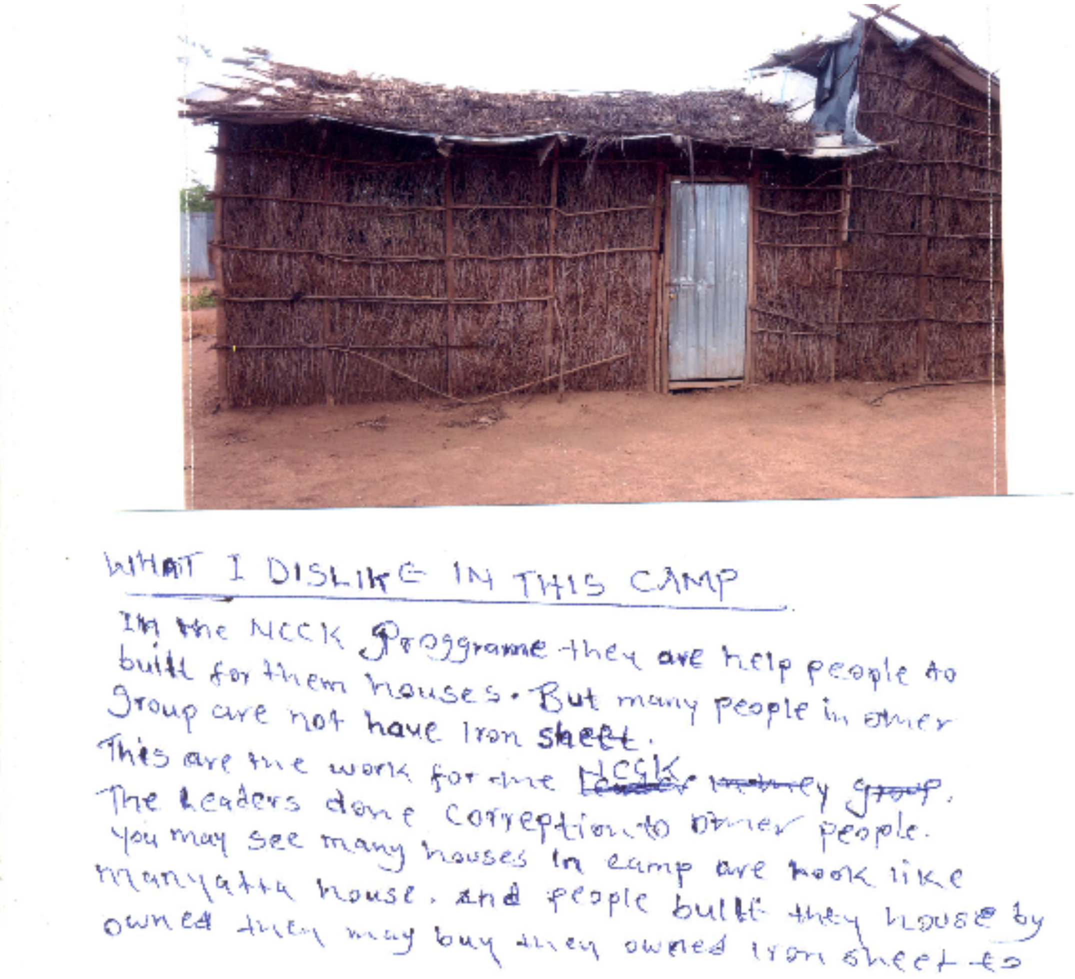
[32] When I speak of Sudan and Sudanese, unless otherwise indicated, I am referring to a country and people who are now technically South Sudan and South Sudanese. They arrived in Kenya as Sudanese from southern Sudan, as South Sudan did not yet exist. This is still how they self-identify, as do other camp residents.

[33] Dates of birth from 1992 to 1998.



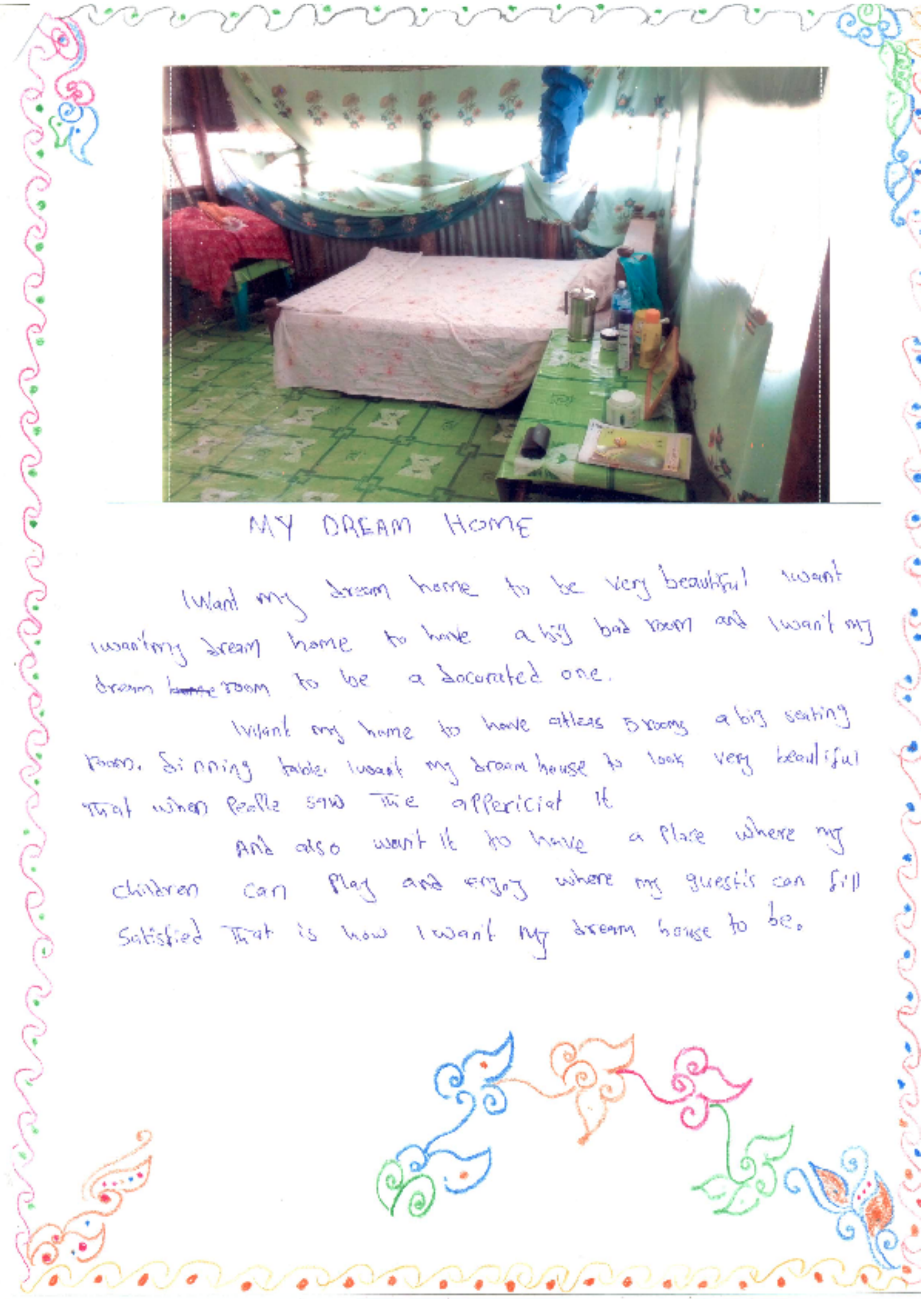
WHAT I DISLIKE IN THIS CAMP

IN the NCCK Proggrame they are help people to built for them houses. But many people in other group are not have Iron sheet.
This are the work for the ~~leader~~ NCCK ~~money~~ group.
The leaders done correption to other people.
You may see many houses in camp are look like manyatta house. and people built they house by owned they may buy they owned iron sheet to

Figure 3: Photograph by Mary.

Mary, 18, took the picture above to illustrate what she dislikes in the camp. In her accompanying text, she denounces the poor state of the shelters and attributes this to corruption.

The next photograph shows 18-year-old Luula's room and describes her dream home.



MY DREAM HOME

IWant my dream home to be very beautiful Iwant Iwan'tmy dream home to have a big bad room and Iwan't my dream ~~home~~ room to be a Docorated one.

Iwant my home to have atleas 5 rooms a big seating room. Dinning table. Iwant my dream house to look very beaulifal That when People saw The apPericiat it

And also wan't it to have a Place where my children can Play and enjoy where my guestis can fill Satisfied That is how I wan't my dream house to be.

Figure 4: Photograph by Luula.

To mark the end of the classes, we prepared an exhibition in the science laboratory of the secondary school. Students worked as curators for the five displays and they found a title for each wall: “Life is what we make it,” “Us,” “Home Sweet Home,” “One Day” and “Black Spots.” They wrote short accompanying texts and laid out the photographs. Given that none of the students had ever visited an exhibition before, we discussed the purpose of showing their work and how to make it interesting and visually compelling. The number of visitors vastly exceeded our expectations and some of the students, in the enthusiasm of the moment, described the event as the “best day of my life.”

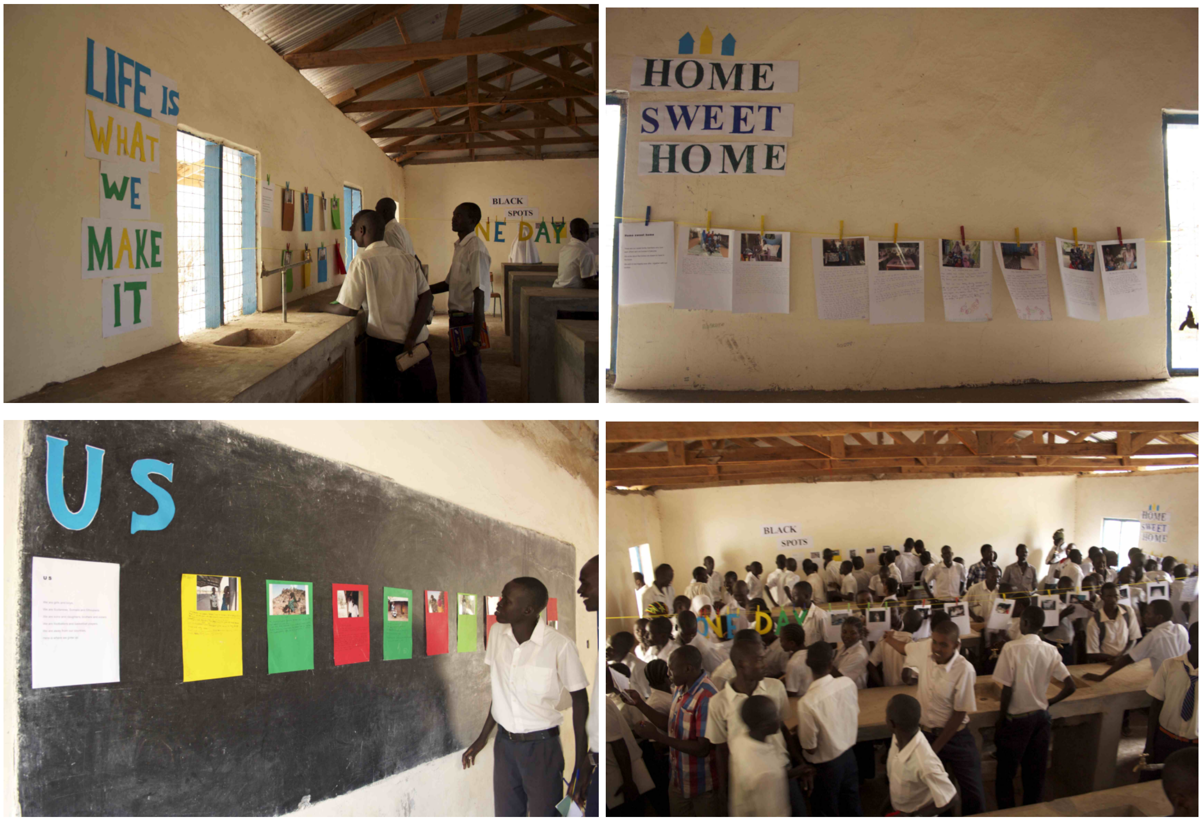


Figure 5: The photography exhibition. Author’s photographs.

Classes proved an interesting way to steadily engage with a group of youth, witness their interactions and dynamics (in particular between boys and girls, between people of the same and different nationalities and with teachers), and to participate in discussions with them. I also interviewed many of these students. Such regular relationships made me aware of features of camp life that were rarely mentioned in interviews. For example, one day, arriving at the secondary school for a photography class around 2:30 p.m., I was met by the deputy director who told me that students would probably be absent: the school had run out of porridge and hungry students had gone home. In fact, they were all there, but did say that they had had no food for lunch. I went to the food sellers behind the school to see if I could get them anything to eat. There were *mandazi*[34] left. I bought some. Students happily ate them. *Mandazi* are worth just a little over ten cents each, but girls did not have this to spend. They were not usually hungry: their families prepared food at home, partly with their food rations, but also with food that they purchased or traded, and they were provided with porridge at school. However, when one of these things failed, they did go hungry and seemingly, this did happen on occasion. Seeing them on a regular basis also meant that they ended up telling me about various details of their lives and their hopes for their future. They asked many questions about my own life, my family and education in my country. The photographs themselves and their accompanying texts helped me understand their reality and prompted more discussions. For example, the exercise we did on a day in their life made it clear that the realities of boys and girls were different in terms of social roles and expectations. Another exercise, about aspects of their life they disliked, led to discussions about the difficulties of the camp and highlighted their view of Kakuma as an unsafe environment. Several times, they went out with their cameras and took pictures of events or sites that they found worth capturing: a fire near the Somali market, the visit of a popular South Sudanese preacher or a Somali wedding.

Community-based approaches to photography have become relatively popular in the last decades and have been used to document the realities of (primarily poor) communities and marginalized groups. Photography projects are often conducted not only as a way of establishing a dialogue and a relationship with participants, but also with the aims of enabling people to identify their community's strengths and concerns, promoting critical dialogue likely to lead to durable changes within a community and reaching policy makers (Catalani and Minkler 2010: 425; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001: 560).[35] The existing literature does not demonstrate in a convincing manner that such objectives have been achieved, but tends to testify to the fact that photography has helped establish a revealing dialogue with participants and enhance the understanding of community assets and needs (e.g., Catalani and Minkler 2010; Chio and Fandt 2007; Green and Kloos 2009; Guerrero and Tinkler 2010; Strack et al. 2004). This is supported by my experience. In addition, I noticed that classes helped youth to voice concerns and gain confidence in their ability to do so, by offering them a safe space for such expression. A more critical perspective is adopted by Prins (2010: 426) who, drawing on Foucault's analysis of surveillance and power, underlines "photography's dual potential for social control and surveillance, and for collective learning and action." Working with photography does call for a few (obvious) reflections about photographs and their meaning, although I used it mainly to elicit discussion rather than as a direct means of information gathering: pictures "represent the view of *someone*" (Sontag 2003: 31), do not speak for themselves and can only provide limited information (see Chap. 2, 3.2.4; Berger and Mohr 1982: 97; Sontag 1977: 23-24).

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[34] *Mandazi* are made of fried dough and are a common snack in Kenya.

[35] According to Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001: 561), such projects are rooted in three theoretical traditions: Freire's (1973) belief that all human beings are capable of looking critically at their world and, in particular, that critical thinking can be fostered through photography and drawing; feminist theory aimed at exposing women's perspectives; and community-based photography, understood as a way for ordinary people to work for social change.

The relationship I established with the photography students was different from the one I had with people I simply spent time with in the camp. Photography students seemed to view me as a figure of authority since I was a teacher, and because I was giving classes in their school setting. Although this gap decreased with time as they became more comfortable, they did not always seem perfectly at ease to intervene and discuss as freely as I had hoped. This kind of dynamic was far less obvious with the journalism students, partly perhaps because they were older than the photography students, but also owing to the less formal character of the class. I ended up spending a lot of time with some of the journalism students outside of class, unlike the photography students. Looking back, I now see that it might have been more fruitful to organize the classes independently of the secondary school. In addition, this might have attracted not only youth who were enrolled in school, but out-of-school youth as well. Still, an interesting outcome of the classes was that they led me to engage with people I would possibly not have met otherwise, younger people and non-Somalis who had also grown up in the camp.

3.3 Giving meaning to observations through interviews

As indicated earlier, I interviewed youth and parents, camp leaders and other adults, as well as employees of organizations working in the camps and local authorities. Interviews appeared a necessary complement to observation, as the sense of actions is not given and decipherable in itself. Similarly, observation would supplement interviews, by allowing me to see actions, interactions and ways of being that might not be mentioned, and providing nuances (Piette 1996: 50). Interviews are also an important means of trying to understand people's experience, as they invite retrospective reflection (Throop 2003).

Seeking to attenuate the asymmetry between researcher and subject, I tried as much as possible to stay away from directed questionnaires, and instead to define with the interviewees themselves matters they were interested in exploring, as suggested by Bourdieu (1993: 905-06). Nonetheless, there were a number of themes that I tended to broach systematically. For example, I talked with youth about their life in the camp, their hopes for the future, and their perception of Somalia and of their compatriots who were raised there. With parents, I often spoke of cultural transmission and raising their children in a refugee camp. In most cases, I also had numerous informal interactions with the people I interviewed. Finally, I carried out semi-structured formal interviews with government representatives and NGO and UNHCR workers.

As Horst points out (2001: 10, 15), pressing people to reply to given questions or even asking too many questions is rarely effective. Establishing a relationship with people takes time and entails being open and interested, respectful and considerate; it means giving and receiving. It also involves being sensitive to the fact that some topics may be hard to discuss, as they stir painful memories or are considered taboo (Boyden 2000). Thus, limited discussion on certain topics does not necessarily mean that they are not of interest or are part of a forgotten history (Kibreab 1999: 402, criticizing Malkki [1995]). I chose not to ask about people's reasons for fleeing Somalia because of the sensitivity of the subject. This did not prevent many from talking about their families' paths into exile, but they were the ones bringing it up.

Among the first people I interviewed were youth I had come to know during my earlier trip. They introduced me to other young people they had grown up with. I then met other youth who were employed by FilmAid and other NGOs, who also introduced me to more people of their generation. Except for Warsame, the chairman of the Union of Somali Youth, whom I crossed paths with by chance in the early days of my research, I only started meeting with "official" youth leaders and elders at a later stage, as I wanted to enter the community through less formal channels. This proved to be a good idea, as I found that leaders were careful in their selection of people to whom they introduced me. They often brought me to refugees in the direst situation, mostly women, stressing that they were the ones on whom I should focus. Nonetheless, they also presented me to youth and other members of their community whom I might not have met otherwise.

Non-Somalis sometimes complained that my focus on the experience of Somalis "was not fair" and asked to be included in the study. Although I emphasized that no assistance was attached to my research, some said that they would still like to be interviewed. I always agreed and it often proved interesting, particularly because it allowed me to hear a different perspective on the camp and also because in a number of instances, they wanted to speak of specific problems they were facing in the camp. This reminded me of Loizos reporting that while he was conducting research in Cyprus, people would sometimes seek him out when they heard that he was interviewing people, as they also wanted to speak with him (1981: 190).

I had planned to work with a translator, while I was taking Somali classes. In the end, the youth who were of interest to me all spoke English, as it is the language of education in Kenya. I therefore conducted most interviews in English. As a result, I decided to learn Swahili rather than Somali, as it is the other shared language in the camp, along with English. Looking back, I think this was a mistake: learning Somali would have helped me establish more intimate connections with youth, engage directly with non-English-speaking adults and gain a better understanding of Somalis in general. My basic knowledge of Swahili did allow me to notice how frequently Somalis incorporated Swahili words into their own language, to remark that it was the language used in the camp between "old-timers" of different nationalities and to understand some of the interactions between youth of various origins.

The only times I needed a translator were when meeting with parents and older people, or with newcomers to the camp. In such cases, youth with whom I had been spending time helped me, which also allowed me to see how they reacted to certain stories and comments. This sometimes led to memorable moments. In one instance, Mahdi, a 21-year-old who arrived in Kakuma when he was a few months old, accompanied me for an interview with a 51-year-old Somali lawyer, Osman. In the end, the lawyer needed no translation, but Mahdi stayed. Osman started talking about the language changes that had occurred during his education in Somalia:

"In primary school, I learned in Arabic. At that time, the Somali language was not written. We would either attend Italian or Arabic schools. I remember that before entering the class, we used to stand and sing in honour of the flag in Arabic."

He stood up and proceeded to sing in Arabic.

"After studying in Arabic for three years, there was the military revolution [led by Siyad Barre in late 1969] and our Somali language was scripted [in 1972]."[36]

He stood again and started singing the same song, this time in Somali.

"It means: 'We are very happy for this flag that looks like the sky. We have to welcome and respect. We should never forget that we gained it through the shedding of war.'"

Mahdi was sitting there looking mesmerized. After the interview, he explained that he had never heard that song, would not be able to sing the Somali national anthem and that witnessing the discussion had been fascinating, as he was discovering new facts about his own country. Similarly, young people attending interviews with their parents sometimes remarked that they had learned new facets of their family history.

In total, I did over a hundred in-depth interviews (see details in Appendix 2), most commonly in people's homes, but sometimes at their place of work, in one of the youth centres, at the Somali administration (a community space), at a leader's house, in one of the camp's restaurants or, in two instances, in the NGO compound. I recorded most of the interviews, which allowed me to focus on the discussion rather than on note-takings. I took notes when people felt uncomfortable about being recorded (see Chap. 7, on trust). I always explained that the recording or my notes were only for my use and would not be further shared or disseminated. In this thesis, I have changed the names of refugees and, in some cases, omitted details that would have made it possible to identify them, even though these might have given additional depth to the study.

I feel that the combination of interviews, classes and participant observation was a good one. Interviews allowed me to have more in-depth conversations and helped me grasp people's perception of their experience. Through classes and participant observation I became more familiar with the daily life of youth in the camp, the relationships between youth and their questioning of social roles. It is worth noting that my understanding of the camp experience was greatly enhanced by certain people, often newcomers, who did not at all correspond to the group I was focussing on. They were living the camp from the inside, but looking at it with fresh eyes. Spending time with newcomers from Somalia made me realize how they perceived those who had grown up in Kakuma, especially with regard to their "Somaliness" and their command of the language, but also in terms of their access to education or their ability to engage with people of various ethnicities. My Swahili teacher, a recently arrived Rwandese refugee, often made revealing remarks. Being 19, he related and interacted with people I was also spending time with, and he would frequently share his insights on community dynamics and the organization of camp life.

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[36] In 1972, the military junta introduced a Latin script as the official orthography of the Somali language. It was accompanied by an edict making Somali the only official language. To diffuse the new orthography quickly, literacy campaigns were organized throughout the country (Abdullahi 2001: 73; Lewis 1993: 150).

Conclusion: Reflections on power, reciprocity and recognition

In concluding, I would like to reflect on my position as a researcher in a refugee camp, on the often ambiguous relationship between the researcher and the "researched" and on how this relationship might influence social interactions. As Wacquant stresses, given its object and the position of researchers as humans, social science will never be "neutral, detached and apolitical" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 40). Hence, researchers have to be critical and mindful of their own position, values and beliefs, and seek to examine and question their findings and interpretations as honestly, openly and thoroughly as possible.

Being a white woman in her mid-thirties and a former aid worker meant that I was perceived as wealthy and possibly able to influence aid organizations, notably on resettlement matters. This led to my receiving a number of requests for assistance. In a few instances, I was asked if I could plead on someone's behalf to Canadian officials, or give significant sums of money. For example, a young Somali man I did not know walked up to me and asked if I could give him 120,000 KSh (approx. 1,400 CAD) to study. When I responded that that was a lot of money, he replied that for me it was not much. Refugee camps are a setting where people receive assistance and are used to visitors coming to assess their needs. Consequently, when I first met with groups of refugees, I was often asked what I was going to provide and I had to clarify that, although I was hosted by FilmAid, I was not there on behalf of an aid organization or a donor, but as a student doing independent research.

Jansen (2011: 30-36) chose not to stay with an NGO or UNHCR when doing his Ph.D. research in Kakuma mainly to emphasize his separation from the humanitarian system. Jasani (2010: 118) decided not to ask for the support of NGOs to gain access to Muslims in Gujarat, India, because of the negative dynamics that existed between them and NGOs. I concur that to prevent confusion between the roles of researcher and aid worker, a researcher should try not to live or be supported by an aid organization (although being "embedded" with FilmAid did allow me to see how humanitarian staff engaged with refugee staff and refugees in general, which I found valuable). However, as a woman, I did not feel comfortable with staying on my own in a guesthouse. I think that working with youth for a sustained period of time and in an open and transparent manner helped erode the view that I was working for and in the interest of an NGO, or that I was involved in the distribution of humanitarian assistance – to the extent that when I met with older people who would ask what I could do for them, youth often responded on my behalf that I was not working with an NGO, but was "just a student" conducting research and teaching voluntarily. However, refugees did know that I had good access to NGOs and UNHCR (and had worked for UNHCR and NGOs for several years) and I did sometimes help refugees to meet with aid workers. This probably accentuated the impression that I held more power or influence than they did as refugees, but I felt that it would be morally wrong not to provide this very limited support.

Anthropologists have long been concerned about the "cultural universe of giving and receiving and the complexity of power involved in any transfer of commodities" (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 211). Lammers (2007: 73-74) comments that when anthropologists started reflecting on the implications of the imbalance of power between researchers and (the poor) "researched," they stressed that they were in a powerful position vis-à-vis the people they were studying and believed this placed on them the responsibility to give a voice to the voiceless. The discourse then shifted from the duty to give a voice to the need to respect the dignity and authenticity of people's voices. This, argues Lammers, still turns informants into passive subjects and anthropologists into powerful agents, which is an inaccurate depiction:

people are not helpless and have managed to survive in hard and threatening environments. Power is not only a matter of wealth and status, but also of qualities such as physical power, intellectual skills, leadership and creativity (Lammers 2007: 74). On all of these dimension, anthropologists are not experts, quite the opposite. I feel an affinity with Hecht (1998: 9), who says that while he never "came to terms with the inequality between [himself] and the Brazilian street children" he was spending time with, he came to realize that he was the one depending on the children and not the other way around. I would add to this that, like refugee youth, these children were in the best position to interpret and give a meaning to their experience, to make sense of their lived world. As a governing principle, I believe that people have to be considered as equals, as deserving the same treatment, respect and consideration (and help, when needed) that I expect to be granted. However, relationships between non-refugees and refugees in camps often depart considerably from this basic rule (Abdi 2004; Agier 2005 [2008], 2008; Agier and Bouchet-Saulnier 2003; Harrell-Bond 1986, 2000; Harrell-Bond et al. 1992; Hyndman 2000).

It is partly because I was not comfortable with doing research in a refugee camp, asking for time, insights and trust without giving something in return, that I chose to organize photography classes (and also because I found this a compelling way to engage with young people). Of course, reciprocity could have simply consisted in being genuinely attentive and interested. This call for reciprocity going slightly beyond the dialogical character of ethnographic research (Fabian 2002: 90) appeared even more important in a context where refugees regularly express their fatigue vis-à-vis the constant surveys, censuses and studies undertaken by aid organizations and researchers (Cooper 2005: 468). It is commonly thought that giving assistance or rendering services will alter the research process, and thus the findings. According to that view, giving might exacerbate the differences between the researcher and the researched and lead people to participate in a project they would not otherwise have been interested in. But might one instead wonder, if no giving-receiving relationship is established, why anyone would engage in a meaningful, trustworthy and respectful relationship with a researcher (Boyden 2000; Lammers 2007: 76)? In all cases, the very presence of a researcher influences social interactions and cultural configurations and has some impact on the construction of accounts and representations (Turner 2000: 51, 59).

Finally, this project can only be defined as engaged. I subscribe to Scheper-Hughes' call, drawing on Bourdieu, for the practice of scholarship with commitment – for "an engaged (sometimes enraged) and militant anthropology" (2004: 42). I started this research with the belief that camps could not be the appropriate long-term response to displacement. While this belief has not changed, my understanding of the camp has gained layers of complexity and I have had to recognize that young people's assessment of their experience is not all negative. They describe the camp as the space that has allowed them to survive, be educated, learn to live with others and, possibly, be resettled. Yet, they also see all the downsides of a prolonged stay in a camp. Throughout this thesis, I try to convey their intricate and nuanced view of their experience. This is partly why I discuss zones of tension, as I believe they allow for more complexity and reflect the ways people negotiate and navigate between social forces and agency.

Chapter 2 - The past is a foreign country

> We are being told that our family has been killed there. But to talk of history, we don't know. When I imagine Somalia, I feel like crying. I think if I go there, people will kill me.
>
> Amadi, 18 years old

For over two decades, Somalia has been plunged into a maelstrom of violence that has driven hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. "As a people," writes Nurrudin Farah (2000: viii), "we've been at the mercy of the traffickers in human misery, cowboy politicians who have cut up our country into fiefdoms run by a cabal of criminals who claim to have the mandate of the clan as their constituency." Two decades is long enough for kids who fled when they were toddlers or were born in exile to become adults. It is through family and community narratives, stories shared by newcomers to the camp and media reports that they have come to imagine their country of origin and the circumstances in which their parents fled. This is a country most have never seen, or if they have, they were so small that they have little or no recollection.

How would people who have never visited their country of origin and their family home imagine them? Which elements would they see as meaningful in depicting such an imaginary land? What about the events that led to their parents' departure and establishment in a refugee camp? Would such memories be central and nurtured, or of minor importance; would they be private or collective; would the stories of parents and children be comparable? Would there necessarily be one standardized and more or less static "mythico-history" (Malkki 1995) or would interaction with refugees of other origins and connection with the country of origin and the world through transnational flows of remittances and information have prevented such a static creation (Appadurai 1996: 4; Horst 2006 and 2008; Lindley 2007)? What would individuals and communities choose to remember, or to forget (Augé 1998 [2001]): 121)?

In Kakuma, the family stories that I most commonly heard from Somali youth (after being warned that they had very limited knowledge of the history of Somalia) recounted that before the war, when Siyad Barre was in power, life was fine. The land was lush, fruit and vegetables abounded, and milk, meat and fish were readily available. Their parents earned their living decently. Then the war, sparked by tribalism, started and things fell apart. Members of their families were killed, others fled. They ended up in Kenya, first living in one of the coastal camps. The camp was burned down, they moved to another one, then to another one, until there were no options left, other than relocating to Kakuma or returning to Somalia. Their parents opted for Kakuma, as the violence was raging in Somalia then, as it is now. They are fortunate their parents left: had they stayed in Somalia, it is unlikely that they would be alive to tell their story. Their account is one of loss, but not of mourning for those losses. The expected path is not one of return, but of further migration to the West.

This chapter is about life before Kakuma and how youth narrate the history that has transformed their lives and those of their families. To reflect on this, I will first present an overview of forced displacement in Somalia and the arrival of refugees in Kenya. I will make a detour to the Mombasa camps, on the Kenyan coast, as this is where most of the youth lived when they first arrived in Kenya. This will allow me to focus on these young people's narrations of their personal history in a broader sociopolitical context and show that while young people's accounts are individualized, they also share certain characteristics. The history of the collapse of Somalia is important because it led to the flight of parents of youngsters who then grew up in Kenya. It also matters because it has nourished the imagination of young people growing up in exile, has helped them cope with their present in making them appreciate Kenya's relative safety, and has often made their return to Somalia inconceivable.

1. "A country in exile"[37]

> My mother says Somalia was good before the war. At that time, under Mohamed Siyad Barre, the city was fine and business was going on. Then it all went wrong. Until right now, bad people are there.
>
> Yusri, 19 years old

The long-lasting violence and political instability that have characterized Somalia since the collapse of the centralized government in 1991, compounded by recurring droughts[38] and floods, have substantially destroyed infrastructure and livelihoods and forced considerable numbers of people to flee (Farah et al. 2007: xi; Menkhaus 2008: 4, 8). More than one in four Somalis – over two million people out of a population of 9.8 million people – have been displaced (UNDP 2013: 197; UNHCRc, 18 May 2013; UNHCR 2013: 1).[39]

Although movement has been ongoing since the late 1990s, three key periods of displacement can be roughly distinguished. The first significant one, from 1988 to 1992, was provoked by the collapse of the state and the ensuing clan war, an extreme situation aggravated by a drought. For a decade beginning in the mid-1990s, there was a period of relative calm, but the situation in south-central Somalia was not stable enough to encourage substantial repatriation. Hence, when movement resumed in 2006, with the ousting of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and the subsequent unremitting violence, hundreds of thousands of people joined the previously displaced or were forced to move again. In 2011 and 2012, a severe drought exacerbated by governance failures resulted in a famine that, again, caused massive displacement (Lindley 2011: 3, 5; Tisdall 2012). "Before 92, there was tribalism, then came the warlords, then religion became the reason for fighting," summarized 33-year-old Dayib who fled from Somalia in 2003. "That is the worst: under the name of religion, they want to eliminate all people, regardless of their age and gender. At least, with tribalism, women and children were not targeted. With tribesmen, you know what they want, but with them, you can't know."

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[37] This title is borrowed from Nuruddin Farah (1998: 715).

[38] Serious droughts have hit Somalia in 1964-1965, 1970-1975, 1983-1986, 1990-1992, 1996-1997, 2004, 2006, 2008-2009 and 2011-2012 (FAO 2004, 2006 and 2008; Horst 2006: 49).

[39] UNHCR statistics indicate that in 2013, approximately one million Somalis were refugees and some 1,117,000 were internally displaced (UNHCRc, 18 May 2013; UNHCR 2013: 1). This is based on a UN population estimate of 9.8 million people. The last public census was conducted in 1975 (UNFPA 2012).

The following pages briefly describe the main periods of displacement and the archetypal path of people fleeing (see graph, Appendix 4). The Somali conflict (and resulting forced displacement) has often been reduced to a tribal feud exploited by warlords. Yet, in considering Somalia's recent past, it is evident that external meddling has played a significant role in shaping and exacerbating divisions and violence (Menkhaus 2009: 223; Samatar 1997: 687). Thus, the progressive collapse of Somalia must be understood in the light of internal factors as well as external ones, notably the colonial legacy of the British and Italians, as well as the lasting results of international aid and the Cold War, and the influence of Western politics. Colonialism induced a tribalisation of political life, while pushing aside customary authority and traditional institutions, as well as causing uneven development and, overall, underdevelopment of domestic resources (Horst 2006: 55-56; Doornbos and Markakis 1994: 84; Samatar 1997: 693-697; Samatar and Samatar 1987: 676-679). When the country became independent in 1960, it was heavily reliant on external aid and thus, "external inputs virtually set the agenda for Somali development" (Samatar and Samatar 1987: 680). During the Cold War, Somalia was a sought-after area, due to its strategic location at the entry to the Red Sea and close to the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait (through which most of the oil shipments from the Persian Gulf to Western Europe travel), and therefore the object of external interest and competition, and changeable funding. In short, outside interference in the economy and politics of the country have long fuelled tensions and volatility, and heightened poverty, and continue to do so, the country having become one of the targets of the destabilizing (proxy) Global War on Terror (Verhoeven 2009).

1.1 A short history of the Somali exodus

1.1.1 Civil war, state collapse, clan war and drought (1988-1992)

The Somali civil war that began in 1988 triggered more than two decades of conflict. It led to the fall of Siyad Barre's authoritarian regime in 1991 and the collapse of the Somali state. In total, some 800,000 people fled to neighbouring countries (UNHCR 2012a). Most of the parents of youth who grew up in camps in Kenya fled from south-central Somalia during that period.

The war first affected northwestern Somalia where, in response to Barre's repression and perceived marginalization of the northwest, the Somali National Movement (SNM) was seeking an independent state corresponding to the colonial borders of British Somaliland. In May 1988, the SNM seized Hargeisa and Burao (Ambroso 2002: 5-6). Barre's infantry counterattacked with extreme force, levelling the two cities. Violence killed 30,000 to 60,000 people. Hundreds of thousands fled within the country. Up to 650,000 people sought asylum in the Somali regions of neighbouring Ethiopia and Djibouti (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10; Canada 1991; Gundel 2002: 257, 265; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 216; Kleist 2004: 7; Markos 1997: 367).

The conflict escalated during the next two years and spread to Mogadishu where, from December 1990 on, Barre's regime fought armed factions organized along clan lines, resulting in enormous destruction (Kleist 2004: 7). Within two months, the government was overthrown. The SNM gained command of the north and the self-proclaimed independent Somaliland progressively stabilized. In Mogadishu and most of southern Somalia, rebel groups failed to agree on the formation of a government (Lindley 2010: 6). The Somali state had collapsed and a long period of warfare, widespread insecurity, and food crisis began. Basic services and central security forces had disappeared, replaced by several clan militias. Indiscriminate killing, retaliation against government supporters (members of the president's clan, the Marehan, and suspected collaborators), and lack of supplies led to considerable displacement. By 1992, up to half of Mogadishu's 1.25 million inhabitants had fled to camps on the fringes of the city, or south to the Jubba regions or, in the case of government soldiers and the Marehan, west to the Gedo region (Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1992; Africa Watch 1995; Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10-11; Canada 1991; HRW 1991; Gundel 2002: 257; Markos 1997: 368; Menkhaus 2005: 11). For many, the only escape route open was the ocean. Within weeks, thousands of Somalis were arriving in Mombasa by boat (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 5).

From late 1991 to March 1992, Somalia was torn apart by intense clan-based warfare for control of rural and urban resources, such as fertile agricultural lands, markets, ports and water points (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10; Lindley 2011: 7). Fighting centred on Mogadishu and the inter-riverine agricultural area between the Jubba and Shabelle rivers, critically disrupting food supplies. The violence and insecurity were such that most humanitarian agencies pulled out of the country. At the height of the civil war, in 1992, a major drought hit south-central Somalia (Ahmed and Herbold Green 1999: 120; Horst 2006: 49). The main victims of the violence and the drought were traditionally marginalized riverine and inter-riverine agro-pastoral communities and coastal minority groups who were caught in the middle of the fighting (HRW 1993; World Bank 2005: 11).[40] By the fall of 1992, it was estimated that violence and famine had killed up to 300,000 in the previous year (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10; Canadian Forces 1997: vol. 1). Some 3.5 million people fled. Of that number, an estimated one million became refugees. A more affluent minority headed for the West, but most went to neighbouring countries, including some 300,000 to Kenya (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10; Gundel 2002: 264-265).

The dramatic humanitarian situation prompted an international response, but large-scale peacekeeping interventions from 1992 to 1995 failed to re-establish stability and security. A US-led multinational military force, UNITAF, was launched in December 1992, known as "Operation Restore Hope". This "humanitarian intervention"[41] was tasked with establishing "as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief in Somalia" (UN Security Council: para. 10). This was replaced by UNOSOM II in May 1993. De Waal (1998) holds that the operation itself and the use of overwhelming force was not adapted to the humanitarian needs of the Somalis nor driven by altruistic considerations, but stemmed from the desire to test "the newly emerging doctrine of 'humanitarian intervention'." However, Besteman (1996) and Gibbs (2000) argue that Somalia was of strategic interest to the USA, thanks to its geographic location (as well as to the USSR [Horst 2006: 56]). This led to substantial support from the US to the Siyad Barre regime during the Cold War (the significance of Somalia for the US was embodied by the construction of one of the world's biggest American embassy compounds in Mogadishu [Besteman 1996: 581]). Although the country lost some of its value with the end of the Cold War, the US still considered access to Somalia as strategically significant. In addition, it was the site of oil exploration by an American company, Conoco (Gibbs 2000: 43-44, 52). On the ground, driven by a racism engrained in colonialism, American, Italian, Belgian and Canadian troops committed acts of great brutality, including torture, rape and killing (Razack 2004: 3, 37, 51). This fostered resentment among the Somali population, which strongly impacted on their support for the mission (de Waal 2007). In the West, the popularity of a military intervention in Somalia dropped drastically as peacekeeping operations floundered and the dead bodies of 18 American soldiers were paraded through Mogadishu by anti-UN protesters. By 1995, the international community had largely withdrawn from Somalia, leaving the country divided and without a government (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 11; Lindley 2011: 7; Gundel 2002: 258). Luling (1997: 287) assesses that the main effects of the intervention were to "reinforce the power of the 'warlords' it set out to destroy, establish Somalia's dollar economy, and raise the expectations of various interest groups to a level which could never again be met."

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[40] Even though Somalis have often been depicted as a homogenous population sharing one culture, one language and one religion, approximately a third of Somalis are not from one of the main clans and belong to minority groups. The biggest minority is the Bantu or Mushunguli (15 percent of the Somali population). Small groups (each representing between 0.2 percent and 0.5 percent of Somalis) include the Bravanese or Barawa, Rerhamar, Bajuni, Gaboye or Midgan/Madiban and Ashraf (UNOCHA 2002: 1).

[41] Gibbs (2000: 42) defines humanitarian intervention as "forceful interference in the internal politics of one country, undertaken by another country or countries, motivated primarily by altruistic considerations. Such interventions have often been undertaken in the context of peacekeeping operations, although humanitarian intervention differs in key aspects from classical peacekeeping. In classical peacekeeping, international military forces are assumed to refrain from any intervention in the affairs of the country or countries where they operate. Peacekeepers are deployed only with the permission of the affected parties, and they adhere to the norm of *nonintervention* and strict impartiality."

From the mid-1990s to 2005, there was a period of relative stability. Most of those who had fled to Ethiopia and Djibouti from the northern part of the country repatriated between 1997 and 2005. However, the situation in the south-central region never became stable enough to prompt such returns from Kenya (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 27; UNHCRa; Grayson et al. 2013: 21-22).[42]

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[42] The number of registered Somali refugees in Ethiopia decreased from 514,000 in 1991 to 15,900 in 2005 (UNHCRa). Large-scale repatriation from Ethiopian camps started in 1997. Between 1992 and 2000, UNHCR statistics indicate that the number of registered Somali refugees in Kenya declined from some 285,600 to 137,400 and later stabilized at approx. 150,000. The decrease in the refugee population cannot be attributed solely to repatriation: a number of refugees informally migrated onwards and settled in Kenyan cities or in a third country (Kleist 2004: 9).

1.1.2 Ousting of the Islamic Courts Union and ensuing chronic violence (2006-2012)

In late 2006, widespread violence resumed when the ICU, which had expanded its control over most of southern Somalia, was ousted by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), backed by the Ethiopian army and later by an African Union peacekeeping mission, AMISOM. The ICU's hardline militia wing, al-Shabab, mounted a violent opposition against the TFG, Ethiopian and AMISOM forces, using new forms of urban violence. This marked a shift in the nature of the Somali crisis: the conflict was no longer clan-based, but had become an ideological one (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10). In the following years, the TFG failed to defeat or negotiate effectively with al-Shabab. The violence led to a massive humanitarian crisis and forced over 870,000 people to flee Mogadishu (Lindley 2010: 2; 2011: 9; Menkhaus 2010: 12-13). More than 170,000 refugees arrived in Kenya between 2007 and 2010 (UNHCRa). Most of the Somali refugees who have arrived in Kakuma over the last few years were part of this movement.

In the first half of 2011, the TFG controlled about half of Mogadishu as well as pockets on the borders with Kenya and Ethiopia (Lindley 2011: 9). Starting in mid-2011, the group began to lose control of a series of urban areas (Menkhaus 2012). In October 2011, Kenya sent hundreds of troops to Somalia after a spate of kidnappings within its borders, citing the threat posed by al-Shabab to regional stability. A month later, shortly after the TFG requested help from the international community and neighbouring countries to secure Somalia, Ethiopian forces also crossed the Somali border to combat al-Shabab (BBC, 19 Nov. 2011). The participation of Kenyan forces (which were still militarily engaged there under African Union command at the time of my research) was primarily intended to stabilize the border region and, possibly, help create a safe zone, "Jubbaland," inside Somalia, both to stem the arrival of new refugees and to pave the way for the return of others (BBC, 17 Oct. 2011; HRW 2012; Lindley 2011: 29-30; Panapress, 30 March 2012). A new Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in October 2012, ending an eight-year transitional government. Even though the situation improved somewhat in 2012, stability and safety remained uncertain, and although al-Shabab suffered several defeats in 2012, losing control of a number of key towns, it continued to carry out attacks throughout my stay in Kakuma (HRW 2013a).[43]

1.1.3 Drought, food crisis and lack of humanitarian assistance (2011-2012)

While insecurity was already causing displacement and seriously limiting humanitarian access, a severe drought hit southern Somalia from July 2011 to mid-2012. In the absence of a functioning government able to respond to the crisis, and of sufficient humanitarian assistance, large numbers of agro-pastoralists and farming families who lost their livelihoods moved away. Some 290,000 Somalis crossed to neighbouring countries. More than half of them arrived in Kenya and settled in one of the Dadaab camps (UNHCR 2011c: 89, 95).

1.2. Routes into exile

> We came with few belongings. We left our homes thinking we would be back soon. We left the whole family album there. I only have a few ID photos of my father. That is how hasty it was. We were relocating to Afmadow for a few days. 20 years later, we are still not back.
>
> Absame, 27 years old

Fleeing is a chaotic process. People rarely have a clear idea of their final destination and have little time to plan their trip. The distinction between transnational migration and refugee movements is fundamental in that respect: although in both cases leaving is a choice, for refugees, options are often limited and the notice is very short (Meintel 1990: 61), restricting the preparations for departure and leading to more risk-taking (Grabska 2010: 482). Twenty-two-year-old Nuradin's detailed narrative of his family's path into exile offers a good illustration:

> We were living in Mogadishu. My father was an inspector in the presidential police. He was protecting the president. My mother was a housewife. When the war started, the president left for Bardere [a district of Gedo region, traditional home-base of the Marehan, Siyad Barre's clan]. My father went along. Me, my

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[43] For example, in January 2013, at least one person was killed and many more were wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up among a group of security officials outside the Somali prime minister's office (BBC, 29 January 2013). In March 2013, Mogadishu's beachfront was hit, killing two (*The Telegraph*, 1 March 2013). In April 2013, at least 20 people were killed in Mogadishu after al-Shabab attacked Mogadishu's main court buildings (*The Guardian*, 14 April 2013).

> brother and our mother stayed in Mogadishu until the war broke very hard. We were the people who were targeted because we were of the same ethnic group as the president. My mom decided to take us to Bardere, but two weeks later, the war started there too, so the president went to Kenya and people started running. We had to leave. My father was not with us, only my mother and my aunt. We walked for 18 days and nights without any food, just drinking the water we could find, begging for milk to cattle people. Some militia came and asked to talk to my mother. While she was with them, two others came and raped my aunt.
>
> At some point, my father left everything and decided to look for us. He was told that people were moving that way. So he started walking behind us with an uncle who was very young. Another militia got them and killed my uncle. My father escaped and finally, he reached us. We entered Kenya through Calqalow [in Gedo region]. There was a white guy. My mom says he was a priest or working for the Red Cross. He was providing food, but it was not quite okay. I became very sick. The black of my eyes went up. I was taken to the hospital. I was about to die, but my time was not there.
>
> We were few families. The white man said if we wanted to go into Kenya, he would take us. Some decided to go back into Somalia. The man put us into a lorry and took us to Utange.[44] There was a camp there. We settled and started living there. But after two years, a fire broke out and we were taken to Marafa for a year and a half. Then another fire broke out and we were taken to Benadir [or Swale Nguru]. In October 1996, there was another fire. We were told we had to go to Kakuma.

After staying in Kakuma for five years, Nuradin's family moved to Nairobi. His mother sold the gold jewellery she had received as a dowry to pay for the family's expenses. Two years later, there was a new registration in Kakuma and the family headed back to the camp, so as not to lose their ration card. They did not return to Nairobi afterward.

Such a story seems emblematic of forced displacement dynamics. The majority of people fleeing their usual place of residence because of clashes in the streets of their city will take refuge in another part of the city or its suburbs, in areas somewhat removed from the violence. Some will travel to another region of the country, which is what Nuradin's family did when the war started in Mogadishu. They moved to the Gedo region, which had been mostly spared by the violence and was their clan's traditional area, making it a place where they would be protected. Like most people fleeing, they were hosted by relatives. A significant minority do, however, stay with other displaced persons in informal settlements and sometimes receive humanitarian assistance. The significance of clan grew during the Somali conflict and flight followed clan patterns: people fled in the direction of the traditional locations of their families and clans, both within Somalia and across the border to Kenya (Horst 2006: 47).

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[44] Utange, Marafa and Swale Nguru (commonly referred to as Benadir in Kakuma) are camps that were set up in the early 1990s on the Kenyan coast. All were closed in the late 1990s.

Most people fleeing do not leave their country of origin. Perhaps a third of them cross an international border, thus becoming refugees (Jacobsen 2005: 1; Van Hear 2004: 2).[45] Among those leaving their homeland, most settle in the border region of the host country, an area that often shares characteristics with the locality of origin, so as to monitor developments in their country and return when conditions allow. About half of the refugees are housed by the host community, are never registered and receive no international assistance. The other half settle in camps set up by the government of the host country, UNHCR and humanitarian organizations, usually in under-developed areas, far from urban centres and close to the borders of the country of origin (Agier 2005 [2008]): 62; Jacobsen 2005: 1, 6-7, 39, 92; Zimmerman 2009: 75).

Contrary to the popular image likening refugee flows to human tides (Mann 2011: 82), most refugees travel alone or in small groups. Their journeys are often unplanned, as highlighted by Ayan: "I asked my mom why they decided to come to Kenya. She said: 'We didn't decide. We were there, some cars came and we were told to get in. We were brought to Kenya and we went to camp Barawa [or Hatimy].' It was 1992. My mom was pregnant with me. That is where I was born." It is rare, however, for refugees to flee in just any direction: they follow familiar routes and try, as much as possible, to go and join relatives who have already left (Gomes 2001: 301). These journeys frequently happen in successive steps, dictated by the situation in people's area of residence and place of refuge (Jacobsen 2005: 5; Jureidini 2010: 7). For example, Nuradin's family moved again because the situation degenerated in Gedo. Kenya was nearby. A number of refugees make several trips within their own country before crossing an international border. They may live in a camp and later move to an urban area in the hope of finding work (irregularly) or travel further to a third country (Jacobsen 2005: 7; Zimmerman 2009: 75).

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[45] To be considered a refugee, an individual must have crossed an international border to seek asylum and have a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (1951 Refugee Convention, art. 1 § b) or, in the African context, have been compelled to leave his place of habitual residence to seek refuge outside his country of origin or nationality "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality" (1969 OAU Refugee Convention, art. 1 § 2).

Somalia's troubled history has forced millions of people to flee since the late 1980s. The majority have stayed in Somalia. Most of those who became refugees have remained in eastern Africa. No part of the country has been spared. At the beginning of the civil war, most people who fled were from northwestern Somalia and they crossed the border to neighbouring Ethiopia and Djibouti. Since the stabilization of the northern parts of Somalia in the late 1990s, which led to a large-scale return, people have been fleeing primarily from the south-central region of Somalia. No significant return to the region has occurred since, as it remains volatile. People who fled from there in the early days of the conflict have been in exile for over two decades. Most who left the country sought asylum in Kenya. An exile that was expected to be brief has become prolonged. Parents of youth who grew up in Kakuma fled during the first exodus. They were joined by refugees who arrived after the ousting of the ICU. The last important episode of displacement from Somalia, caused by the food crisis, was extremely visible in the media, but did not lead to significant numbers of new arrivals in Kakuma. As of May 2013, just over one million Somalis were refugees. Neighbouring Kenya had become the main host country, with a population of nearly 500,000 refugees, followed by Ethiopia (240,000) and Yemen (229,500) (UNHCRc, 18 May 2013; UNHCR 2013: 1).[46] The Gulf States, Western Europe and North America are also home to significant Somali refugee populations (Jureidini 2010: 5).

2. Welcome to Kenya

> We lived in Sako. I don't know in which district it is, but it is somewhere between Bardere and Buale, in Jubbaland. My father was a businessman. After the war broke out in 1990, all his cattle were looted. He said: "I no longer want to live in this country." We left in 1991. I was too young to remember. We were among the first to be welcomed as refugees in Liboi. We were there for six months and my younger sister died. We buried her there and then we went to Dagahaley refugee camp [Dadaab].
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> Yasin, 28 years old

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[46] Other main host countries in Africa include Uganda (29,355), Djibouti (18,725) and Egypt (7,702) (UNHCRc, 18 May 2013).

In the fall of 1989, when the Somali state was on the verge of collapsing, a few thousand Somalis crossed into northeastern Kenya and settled near the current site of the Dadaab refugee camps. Within weeks, the government of Kenya demanded their return to Somalia. Several were beaten and forced back to their country. Others dispersed inside Kenya (Canada 1991; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 219). The unsympathetic reception did not stop people from coming. Starting in 1991, when the fighting was concentrated in Mogadishu and the inter-riverine area relatively close to Kenya, tens of thousands poured into the country. Those who came by land mostly crossed through the border town of Liboi. Some from coastal areas such as Kismayo and Mogadishu, sometimes described as "Africa's first boat people" (Verdirame 1998: 12), sailed crowded boats into Kenya, a four-day sea journey (Canada 1992; Farah 2000: 31; UNHCR 1994: 5, 6). In early 1992, the fighting spread to Gedo and the region's residents and those who had moved there for safety fled again to other parts of the country or crossed into northeastern Kenya. Most of them stayed near the Somali border. Significant numbers also settled in urban centres and on the coast, in the vicinity of the port cities of Mombasa and Malindi (Abdullahi 1993: 2; Lindley 2007: 2). A number of richer people fled to Nairobi (Farah 2000: vi). By mid-1992, more than 300,000 Somalis had entered Kenya and another thousand were arriving every day (Canada 1992; UNHCR 1994: 5, 6), an exodus described by Abdullahi (1993: 2) in harrowing terms: "For the last two years frail and sickly Somalis have been pouring into neighbouring countries many having walked for weeks, destitute on the verge of collapse, many drowned when their small boats capsized or died from thirst and hunger."

After outlining the overall reception that refugees encountered in Kenya, I will briefly depict the Mombasa camps, as this is where most of the "old" Somali residents of Kakuma first lived when they arrived in Kenya.

2.1 Policy matters

Until Somalis began to arrive in large numbers, Kenya had "operated a policy of benign neglect," allowing refugees to settle in urban areas and find a livelihood (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 31). The arrival of hundreds of thousands of people in the late 1980s and early 1990s prompted significant policy changes (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220; Kirkby et al.

1997: 181).[47] Newcomers were customarily helped by their local host, but greeted with hostility by the government and the population in general (Abdullahi 1993: 2, 4; Canada 1992; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220; Hyndman 2000: 51). Kagwanja and Juma (2008: 219) distinguish two key periods. During the first, from 1989 to 2002, Kenya's asylum policy was one of "abdication and containment." It became one of interventionism when president Mwai Kibaki took over from Daniel Arap Moi's authoritarian regime in 2002. Even though they had different approaches, "the two administrations viewed Somali refugees through a distinct security prism, with the dictates of state security eclipsing their humanitarian obligations" (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 219).

The first group of Somali refugees arriving in Kenya in 1989 were mostly from clans opposed to the Barre regime. They were given food, shelter and medical assistance, but denied access to the Kenyan Red Cross, UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations (Abdullahi 1993: 20; Canada 1991; Hyndman 2000: 44; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220). After their arrival, the presidents of Kenya and Somalia met. In spite of Kenya's international obligations, Moi agreed to return the refugees to Somalia. In the following years, the Kenyan military and police sealed the border and the coast several times (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220). Concerns about the presence of Somalis were heightened by the relatively warm relations between Moi and Barre, but also by the perception that such a presence would threaten the ethnic balance and revive historical animosities (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 223; Montclos 1999: 3).[48]

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[47] This tendency was not peculiar to Kenya. Milner (2009: 3, 18-19) argues that, in contrast to the generally open approach of the 1960s and 1970s, African states became more reluctant to host refugees in the late 1980s and the 1990s because of a changing political context. In addition, the quality of asylum and protection declined during that period (p.37).

[48] Kenya's difficult relationship with its Somali neighbours and its Somali-Kenyan population dates back to its transition to independence, when the country was struggling to consolidate its territory and maintain colonial borders. During the so-called "*Shifta* War" of 1963-68 some ethnic Somalis in the Northern Frontier District (which became the North Eastern Province and, in 2013, the counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera) fought a secessionist war with the goal of uniting their homeland to Greater Somalia (Montclos 1999: 3; Canada 1992; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 223; Hyndman 2000: 44-47) – *Shifta*, a term derived from Amharic, is used in the Horn of Africa to describe bandits or rebels (Whittaker 2008: 6). At this time, the paramilitary General Service Unit of the Kenyan Army forced civilians into "protected villages" (later described as concentration camps, Odengo 2011) and used harsh military tactics to maintain order (Odengo 2011: 2-3; Whittaker 2008: 1-2, 13-14). Subsequent decades were characterized by continued crackdowns, sporadic border violence and civilian deaths, culminating in the Wagalla Massacre in Wajir in 1984, where up to 5,000 civilian casualties were covered up (Ongeri and Obure, 9 Dec. 2004; Whittaker 2008: 17). The propagandist rhetoric emanating from the conflict

Despite deterrence measures, Somalis arrived in Kenya in large numbers after the fall of Barre's regime. In the end, the Moi government was forced to tolerate Somali refugees, partly because the country was a signatory to international and regional conventions on the rights of refugees, but also because it had no real means of physically preventing the influx. Moreover, there were pressures from donors (Canada 1992; Crisp 1999: 17; Hyndman 2000: 51; Milner 2009: 107). The country's refugee population shot from 16,000 in March 1991 to over 425,00 at the end of 1992 (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220). Somalis still faced antipathy when arriving in Kenya. Some who fled by sea were turned away before reaching the coast; others were detained on board their vessels and prevented from disembarking. This practice led to many deaths, as boats capsized or ran short of essential supplies. Once on Kenyan soil, some were harassed by the police, required to move into camps or forcibly returned to Somalia, a practice explicitly prohibited under international law (Abdullahi 1993: 5, 20-21; Canada 1991; HRW 1992).

During this period, the government abdicated its power to UNHCR, first allowing the agency to undertake refugee status determination, then agreeing to or prescribing the encampment of refugees, an option the government had rejected for many years.[49] In 1992 and 1993, UNHCR spent 40 million USD to set up refugee camps and border sites in Kenya (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 24). The first camps for Somali refugees were established in northeastern Kenya and around Mombasa, Kenya's second largest city. Kakuma refugee camp was also opened during that period to host refugees from southern Sudan (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220-221; Milner 2009: 87; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 31-33). In the early 1990s, there were more than fifteen refugee camps in the country;[50] these were later consolidated into the Dadaab and Kakuma camps, respectively located in northeastern and northwestern Kenya (Canada 1999; Montclos 1999a: 29). Between August 1992 and July 1997, Kenyan authorities rounded up urban refugees a number of times for removal to camps (Abdullahi 1993: 7;

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framed ethnic Somalis as infiltrators and economic scapegoats responsible for a plethora of social and environmental ills (Abdullahi 1993: 8-9).

[49] While Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005: 33) suggest that the de facto encampment policy was strongly promoted by UNHCR and was only adopted by the government for this reason, a number of authors, including Hyndman and Nylund (1998: 24), Hyndman (2000: 51, 87), Kagwanja and Juma (2008: 220) and Milner (2009: 107) claim it was the government that refused to allow UNHCR to house refugees in central Kenya and pushed for the encampment of refugees, so as to protect itself from a "Somali invasion."

[50] In 1993, camps included Mandera, El Wak, Banissa, Liboi, Ifo, Dagahaley, Hagadera, Kakuma, Ruiru, Utange, Marafa, Hatimy, Jomvu, Swaleh Nguru, Thika, St.Annes, Majengo and Walda (Montclos 1999a: 29).

Hyndman 2000: 51) where humanitarian and security conditions were described by Human Rights Watch (1993) as a "public scandal."

Almost immediately after securing re-election in December 1992, Moi began calling for the quick return of refugees to Somalia (Abdullahi 1993: 9; Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 24). In response to the pressure and a request by the Secretary General of the UN, UNHCR initiated a Cross-Border Operation in southern Somalia. The aim was to curtail the influx of refugees into Kenya and to encourage voluntary repatriation through a number of quick-impact projects and small-return assistance. The cross-border "preventive zone" extended approximately 300 kilometres into Somalia, with the Jubba River demarcating its northern boundary (Chimni 1993: 447; Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 26; Kirkby et al. 1997: 182-3; UNHCR 1994: 8). By June 1993, some 30,000 refugees had returned to Somalia, 12,000 of them with UNHCR's support (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 27). In 2000, the registered Somali refugee population had declined to some 137,400 (UNHCRa). However, a significant proportion of the departing refugees did not return to Somalia, but continued onwards to Kenyan cities or third countries (Kleist 2004: 9).

Before the influx of Somalis, the Moi administration had drafted a refugee bill that was shelved for over a decade. It was adopted and passed into law in 2006, becoming Kenya's first domestic legal instrument to deal with refugees. Through this law, the government takes over key functions of reception and registration (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 220, 225; Lindley 2011: 4). While Kenya never officially designated the camps as the site where refugees ought to stay,[51] the country has implemented a de facto encampment policy since the early 1990s, denying refugees freedom of movement and the right to earn a livelihood – rights included in the 1951 Refugee Convention (art. 17 and 26) (HRW 2009: 43; Hyndman 2000: 51; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 33). The policy has "rested on two pillars: abdication of responsibility to humanitarian agencies, particularly UNHCR, and pushing refugees to the margins of society, away from the main economic activities in farmlands and urban areas"

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[51] Section 16(2) (a) and (b) of the Refugee Act provides that the "Minister may by notice in the Gazette, in consultation with the host community, designate places and areas in Kenya to be . . . refugee camps" and makes unauthorized residence outside of demarcated areas an offence punishable by a fine of up to 20,000 KSh (approx. 250 CAD) and/or six months' imprisonment. However, such areas have never been designated or gazetted (Campbell et al. 2011: 20; RCK 2012: 28).

(Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 221). Several measures have been taken to ensure that refugees remain in camps: freedom of movement is restricted through the withholding of proper documentation,[52] the provision of humanitarian aid is generally limited to the camps[53] and the refugee status determination process in Nairobi is cumbersome (HRW 2009: 43-47).

Kenya has justified its restrictive refugee approach, which undermines the quality of asylum, by stating that the scale of the influx initially overwhelmed the country's refugee procedure and that such a large population could only live in camps. The country claims that this policy has to be continued, due to security concerns and insufficient burden sharing. While these factors are not insignificant, Milner (2009: 90, 107) remarks that Kenya's asylum policies have also been influenced by historical, domestic and international factors, notably the *Shifta* war (see footnote 48), the vulnerability of Moi's regime and the suspension of international aid to the country.

2.2 The Mombasa camps

> We left Somalia in 1992 because of the civil war. As a result, people were being beaten, women raped, properties being stolen by those of the tribe in power. We decided to flee. We went on a boat. It took around three days to get to a place called Kiunga, a port between Kenya and Somalia. We stayed there for about three weeks. Then we were relocated to Marafa camp, close to Mombasa. I don't remember how long we were in Marafa. After that, we moved to Jomvu, in 1993. We faced a lot of challenges: shortage of food, water, insecurity. There was no school. We went to the *madrassa*.[54] After five years, we relocated again, this time to Kakuma refugee camp. When we arrived here, we faced the same problems again.
>
> Ibrahim, 24 years old

Ibrahim's family was among many families who arrived on the Kenyan coast in the early 1990s. Some newcomers self-settled, mainly on the outskirts of Mombassa. Others moved (or were moved, sometimes by force) into one of the formal or informal camps that had been established in the area (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 224; Verdirame 1998: 12 and 2005: 33): Utange, Marafa, Swale Nguru or Benadir, Kwa Jomvu, St. Annes School or Jelliahda, Hatimy and Majengo (Montclos 1999: 3, 5; UNHCR circ. 1993: 1). In 1995, some 75,000 to 92,000 registered refugees were living in the coastal area (Hyndman 2000: 158; Verdirame 1998: 12). The biggest camps were Utange and Marafa, with approximate populations of 19,000 and 27,000 refugees respectively (UNHCR circ. 1993: 1, 3).

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[52] Even though the 1951 Refugee Convention (art. 27) obliges states to issue identity papers to refugees, the only documentation refugees registered in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps receive is a food ration card delivered by UNHCR. In the absence of any other document, refugees cannot move freely within the country (a right protected by art. 26).

[53] Some refugees with specific health or protection problems or who are looked after by relatives are authorized to settle in urban areas (HRW 2009).

[54] *Madrassa* is the Arabic word for "school." Somalis use it to designate a religious school where children study the Islamic religion and the Koran. There are several *madrassas* in the camp, where children go after school and on Saturdays.

These are the camps where most of the refugees who arrived in Kakuma in the late 1990s first lived. For some of those who grew up in camps, this is where their memories start. It is also the birthplace of a number of them. In the accounts of older youth, these camps are often idealized. Even though daily life was not trouble-free, it seemed easier and less constrained than in Kakuma. The proximity to urban areas facilitated relative economic integration and many initially felt more accepted than in Kakuma. Thirty-one-year-old Abdikadir is a Bajuni from Kismayo. He was eleven when his family came to Kenya in 1993. They were met by the UNHCR, the Red Cross and the government:

> They took us to a camp called Jomvu refugee camp in Mombasa. It was located on the top of a hill. From there, you could see the whole town surrounding you and the ocean. That camp was first run by some Islamic agencies. Later on, it was transferred to UNHCR. Sometimes other agencies would come and provide the refugees with something. Life there was much better than in Kakuma. You were living in the city, everything was cheap: the fish, the vegetables, the fruit. Everything you wanted was available. In fact, you could go to the farm and buy fresh items.
>
> Many Bajuni immediately integrated in Kenya because they had family and close relatives. Bajuni Kenyans have been here for a long time. They are in Lamu, Malindi, all the way to Mombasa. You felt at home. In Jomvu, we didn't feel we were refugees. We did everything that other people did. We were not segregated.

Most of Somalis arriving in northern Kenya and later settling in Dadaab were of a Darod subclan (Horst 2006: 46; Menkhaus 2005: 11). The population arriving on the coast had a different profile: some were Darod, but many came from coastal minority groups (Montclos 1999: 21). The main groups were the Benadiri,[55] the Barawa[56] and the Bajuni,[57] at least until fairly significant numbers of refugees started moving by their own means from the Dadaab camps to the coastal ones (Hyndman 2000: 153; Montclos 1999: 6). There were also a number of Somali Bantus,[58] as well as Ethiopians and Nubi from Sudan (Montclos 1999: 6).

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[55] The term Benadiri does not correspond to any sociological reality, but included a certain class of refugees who were seen as foreigners by the Somalis: in its strictest sense, it applied to half-caste traders who were the first

In Mombasa, many refugees managed to open informal businesses from which to earn their living. In the absence of taxation (as the refugees' businesses were not legal), the camps became attractive economic centres (Verdirame 1998: 12, 33). Even though refugees complained about the lack of education and food (Verdirame 1998: 13), life was most likely easier than in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps. The fact that up to 40,000 refugees chose to move by their own means from Dadaab to the coastal camps in 1993 points to that conclusion (Hyndman 2000: 153). According to a UNHCR staff member in Mombasa cited by Hyndman (2000: 153), the move was also motivated by refugees' perception that resettlement opportunities were greater on the coast.[59]

Meanwhile, tensions between the refugees and the host community were mounting.

2.2.1 On the road again

In 1994, the government of Kenya asked UNHCR to close all camps except Dadaab and Kakuma (Canada 1999), so that there would no longer be refugees "anywhere in Nairobi or

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inhabitants of Mogadishu and had settled in a number of coastal cities such as Barawa, Afgoye and Merka. It was however used by refugees in a broader way, simply referring to people from Greater Mogadishu, including people from majority clans (Montclos 1999: 2, 5-7; 2008: 296-97). I return to the construction of group identity and the significance of clans in Chapter 5.

[56] The Barawa also constituted a territorial community, Barawa or Brava, rather than a social group. However, their exodus brought them together and eclipsed the heterogeneity of the group. Like the Benadiri, they define themselves as traders. The Barawa were overwhelmed by the civil war, as their city was repeatedly taken over by fighting parties (Montclos: 1999: 9-11; 2008: 297-301).

[57] Bajuni fisherman were concentrated around the coastal city of Kismayo and the islands of Koyama, Ngumi, Chovayi and Chula. They were perhaps the smallest minority group in Somalia, with a population of approximately 10,000 in 1970. They organized the exile of a number of Darod by boat (Abdullahi 2001: 11; Montclos 1999: 21).

[58] The Bantus, considered non-Somalis and second-class citizens descended from slaves, originated for the most part from Tanzania and settled in the riverine and interriverine area between the Jubba and the Shabelle. Three-quarters of those who sought refuge in Kenya wanted to "return" to Tanzania. More than 3,000 succeeded in getting there, while some 3,300 stopped south of Mombasa (Abdullahi 2001: 10; Montclos 1999: 11-15).

[59] This impression could have stemmed from the targeting of two Somali "minorities," the Benadiri and the Barawa, for resettlement. Some 3,300 Barawa first left for the United Kingdom in 1995. In the next two years, some 7,900 Benadiri and Barawa went to the United States (Montclos 1999: 4). Bajuni complained that they were never considered for resettlement (Verdirame 1998: 13).

Mombasa" (Kenya National Assembly Official Record 1995: 832). Refugees were accused of causing insecurity, harming the Mombasa tourist industry and cutting into the profits of well-established businesses by establishing informal ones (Campbell 2005: 17; USCR 1997, 1999; Verdirame 1998: 12). Irritated because refugees would start building homes outside the camp boundaries when the camps were full, the host community began burning down houses (Hyndman 2000: 154). The depiction of refugees by the former Minister for Home Affairs and National Heritage to the National Assembly in 1996 is unsympathetic: "They are stateless people, they do not know their destination and they tend to be destructive. That is why we had to close Utange and Marafa Refugee Camps because they were very close to our towns like Mombasa and Malindi, which have tourist hotels because they were a security threat to our hotel industry" (Kenya National Assembly Official Record 1996: 485-86).

The camps closed progressively from 1995 to 1999, with forcible evictions by the Kenyan police. Huts were bulldozed a number of times. More than 11,000 refugees were resettled to third countries (Canada 1998a; Verdirame 1998: 13; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 33). Those who were not resettled had to choose between repatriation to Somalia or relocation to Dadaab or Kakuma. Such relocation meant that refugees would have little opportunity to support themselves and would have to depend on humanitarian assistance (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 33). Most rejected both options and "vanished" in the cities of Mombasa and Malindi, and in Eastleigh, the traditionally Somali neighbourhood of Nairobi (Hyndman 2000: 153; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 224; Montclos 1999: 3; Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 220). Indeed, neither alternative was satisfactory, as underlined by Abdikadir, quoted earlier. He was 15 or 16 when the camps closed:

> The only other existing camps were Kakuma, where there were mostly Sudanese, and Dadaab, where Somalis were living. But in Dadaab there was insecurity. Dadaab is like Somalia and as a minority clan, you cannot survive there. You are being targeted, threatened, killed. Many refugees had gone to Dadaab a long time ago and had many problems. So going back to Dadaab was not an option. And Kakuma, no one knew what it was. When they closed Jomvu [where Abdikadir was living] in 1998, many went back to Somalia, but the Hawiye were there on the coast in Somalia and people could not even reach home. In the end, some just left the camp and integrated.

Many moved from one coastal camp to the other, until the only choices left were Kakuma and Dadaab (Verdirame 1998: 13; UNHCR 1998: 1-2). Between 1995 and September 1997, the registered refugee population living in the camps around Mombasa decreased from 92,000 to 7,600. In 1997, some 35,000 people had been relocated to Kakuma and Dadaab camps and 20,000 more were expected to go (Verdirame 1998: 12-13).

The first to close was the biggest coastal camp, Utange, home to some 26,000 refugees and nicknamed Mogadishu for its primarily urban, middle-class population from the capital and Kismayo. It was followed by the second biggest, Marafa. Next was Majengo, a waste ground that accommodated up to 3,800 Benadiri. A number of refugees from the three camps ended up in Swale Nguru. The camp had been initially planned for the Benadiri. Later on, Marehan who feared the Ogaden majority clans in Dadaab had joined them. When Swale Nguru closed, in 1997, the camp population numbered approximately 15,000 people, including 7,156 refugees registered by UNHCR and 8,560 who only appeared on the Red Cross list (Canada 1999; Kenya National Assembly Official Record 1995: 832; Montclos 1999: 3, 5; UNHCR circ. 1993: 3; UNHCR 1998). Hatimy, a camp hosting mainly Barawa refugees, closed in February 1998. Most of its 4,500 residents were resettled in the United States. The remaining refugees were transferred to Kakuma (Canada 1998; Montclos 1999: 5). In October of the same year, Kwa Jomvu, the last formal camp, hosting more than 5,000 Bajuni, was destroyed. Most of its residents opted for repatriation to Somalia (Montclos 1999: 3; Verdirame 1998: 13; UNHCR 1998: 1-2). The last camp to close was an informal one, St. Annes School, that hosted up to 2,500 Barawa refugees until August 1999 (Canada 1999; IRIN 4 and 10 Aug. 1999; Montclos 1999: 5). Some 690 of them were relocated to Kakuma (IRIN 10 Aug. 1999).

By then, refugees were theoretically no longer living on the coast. In reality, many moved informally to urban areas.

3. The history of an unknown place: Guns, clans and other limited memories

> We come from Baidoa [in southwestern Somalia]. I know nothing about Baidoa, but I watched it on the television and I was shown some pictures. Our house is too big. Sometimes I imagine staying in this place. My parents say that Baidoa was the best city, because the war was not reaching. But when it reached in 1995, it killed my sister and my uncle, my grandmother and my grandfather. They were living in the same city, but in a different house than us. That is when we migrated from there. Three of my brothers were left behind. I still don't know where they are.
>
> Zaynab, 18 years old

If I had written the history of Somalia and forced displacement based on the narratives of young people, it would have been shorter and focused on their families' flight, on tribalism and violence – a violence crystallized in a few events that led to the departure of their parents – and on relatively recent incidents attributed to al-Shabab. I would have stressed that the country was perfectly decent before the collapse of Siyad Barre's regime and mentioned the lack of mourning for some long-gone idyllic past, maybe because the wished-for ending is not repatriation, but resettlement in the West. Their family narratives would have fit into a broader historical one. I would also have spent more time describing the conditions of minority groups, and emphasized the displacement of the early 1990s and the violence of the latter part of the decade from 2000 to 2010. I would probably not have mentioned the recent drought. In short, the history I would have written would have been in broad strokes, enriched with a few significant detailed anecdotes, and more focused on the very recent past and present. It would have been told by describing a family's path into exile.

In what follows I will present and discuss the typical version of the history of Somalia and the country's current state as seen by young people. First, however, I will look at the special character and function of narratives,

3.1 A few observations on narratives

Over a decade ago, I accompanied my father on a visit to the hometown of his Jewish-

Hungarian family, Timisoara, formerly in Hungarian Transylvania, now Romania. He had never been there, as he was born in 1940, two years after the family's arrival in the United Kingdom. He looked for streets and parks that he felt he knew intimately for having heard so much about them, even though he had never seen them. There was a particular park where his mother used to walk with his older sister. We found a place he thought had been the family home, but he was not sure. It was set on a square that had lost its splendour. Even though these are places he did not know, he had vivid "memories" of them. In Kakuma, listening to youth's autobiographical narratives, I encountered something very similar: while their narratives would be very fragmentary, there would be parts about places and events that they would talk of as if they had been there, even if that was not the case. Nuradin described very precisely how bored his young mother was, looking after the goats in a far-off area of Somalia. Zaynab talked in detail of the house where her family lived in Baidoa.

They were speaking of a world they had never known, but which had acquired a material reality through narratives of events that happened before their birth, while remaining deeply connected to their present (Hirsch 1998: 419-420). Hirsch (2012) uses the term "postmemory" to describe this "indirect form of recollection," "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and effectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right." Postmemory's connection to the past is thus "mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation." Hirsch, whose parents were Holocaust survivors, says that certain stories that her parents had told her "were more vibrant and more vivid in [her] memories than moments [she] recalled from [her] own childhood."

Young people's autobiographical narratives about that period are remarkably consistent and match those of the older generation. They mostly focus on stories shared by their parents that have become the family's narrative thread, in which the individual stories of the family members are embedded and knitted together, becoming intelligible. Their narratives are made up of historical memories they have learned of, that serve as a background to their lives, but which they have usually not directly lived (Bloch 1995).[60] Stories give coherence and continuity to one's life and "shape our selves and the world in which we live," writes Fivush (2007: 46). In this sense, autobiographical narratives go beyond individuals. They are "about the historical time and place within which lives are lived and interpreted" (p.52). They are fluid and social, subject to constant remoulding through people's interactions and sharing (Candau 2005: 73; Halbwachs 1925 [2002]: Chap. 5 and Conclusion; Meintel 1990: 56; O'Neill and Harindranath 2006: 42).

For a number of writers (e.g., Barthes [1966], Mink [1970]), a narrative is a fiction, a representation, or a way of giving coherence to an otherwise messy reality. From this perspective there is discontinuity between reality and narratives. Carr (1986: 16) argues that narratives are "extensions and configurations" of everyday life, and in that sense there is continuity between reality and narratives. Ricoeur (1991: 188), through the notion of the narrative identity of a person or a historical community that is the "sought-after site of this fusion between narrative and fiction," proposes an apt in-between position in which narratives are neither pure fiction nor continuity. As in fiction, narratives are given a form, events are selected, and many are forgotten. Forgetting, writes Augé (1998 [2001]: 121), is necessary in order to go on living.

When young people recount the flight of their families, they are telling a story they have shared many times before, in particular to newcomers to the camp and aid workers. It is a well-rehearsed account in which coherence is key, as it is a crucial feature in asylum and resettlement interviews. This is visible in the remarkable consistency of the events chosen and narrated by various members of the same family and underlines that the context in which a story is told, its tellers and the audience are significant (Carr 1986: 5). There were instances where other members of the community would tell me a different version of the family's past, often related to painful events, such as the departure of a parent from the camp. A number of youths described how their father walked away and never came back. Later I would hear from their friends that the father in question had been resettled with another of his wives.[61] This happened often enough that I started thinking that saying someone had disappeared without saying goodbye was a euphemism for a person who had left the camp and did not send news, not someone who had literally vanished. In some cases, refugees would ask if I wanted the real story or the UNHCR one, an aspect I will discuss in Chapter 7.

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[60] In speaking of memories, I am usually referring to social memory, an individual memory that is built on shared information and social and historical milestones. It is a form of memory that varies from one person to another and is in constant transformation through interaction (Connerton 1989: Chap. 1). Collective memory refers to an institutionalized memory, a memory that is fixed through an ideological apparatus (Halbwachs 1925 [2002]: 196, 206).

On at least one occasion, I figured that in interacting with refugees, I was contributing to the revision of accounts. I had asked the journalism students to write an article about asylum seekers arriving in fairly large numbers from South Sudan. Reading articles mentioning that people had fled because of a lack of access to education in their country, I asked what made someone a refugee. They were uncertain, so I explained that refugees were granted international protection as a result of being forced to flee because of "a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (1951 Refugee Convention, art. 1 § b) or "because of acts of external aggression, occupation, domination by foreign powers or serious disturbances of public order" (1969 OAU Refugee Convention, art. 1 § 2). I noted that the unavailability of education alone would probably not be valid grounds for refugee protection. A few days later, one of the Somali students, Ali, a 25-year-old who had arrived in Kenya alone when he was 12, came to tell me that in fact, he was not a refugee: "I came to Kenya because I wanted to study. I could have stayed in Somalia. Life was difficult, but I was not really unsafe. I just wanted to go to school and there were no schools." I clarified that because he was Somali and Somalis were *prima facie* refugees in Kenya, and thus recognized as a refugees in the absence of evidence to the contrary, he was considered a refugee. I added that if he had undergone refugee status determination and said that the only reason for his flight was the lack of access to education in Somalia, he might indeed not have been recognized as a refugee. I imagine that if he were ever interviewed for resettlement he would rewrite his storyline.

Whether they were there or not, youth often alternate between "we" and "they" when talking about the family's life in Somalia and the departure. Of course, they know that they were not there, but the use of "we" might express the strong relationship between their family past and their current presence in a camp. Young people are placing their lives in the context of their family history, making their lives understandable as members of a family that existed before they were born and "provide[d] that stage on which one's individual life will be played out" (Fivush 2007: 51). Bloch (1995) understands the use of "we" in historical family accounts as a way of marking the continuity found between people united by a moral bond. Past, present and future interact, determining "one another as parts of a whole" (Carr 1986: 31).

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[61] Polygamy is customary to the Somali society. Men can marry up to four wives.

3.2 The past is a foreign country

> Somalia is a foreign country to me, even though I am Somali. I know nothing about that place. My parents told me terrible things about it. They faced a lot of stress and trauma. Some of my relatives were killed. My parents fear to go back and think that some people who created problems are still active. My parents came from the same tribe as Siyad Barre. That is why we were attacked and came here. They are afraid that if they went back, they would be attacked again. Maybe things have changed: it is now al-Shabab that's killing people. Their main target is the youth. I would be afraid to be recruited by force as a soldier. Me, I have never carried a knife. If I went there, I would fear to be killed.
>
> Warsame, 23 years old

When I asked young people how they imagined Somalia, they usually began by mentioning violence, tribalism and al-Shabab, blending the past into the present. The past and the present seemed to constantly interact and feed into one another. It is only when I inquired how they imagined the country before the war and what memories their parents had shared with them that they spoke of the magnificence of the country. But the account was generally short and would quickly turn to the civil war and the family's departure. They were more loquacious when it came to the current conditions in Somalia and their arrival in Kakuma, a foundational story that I will discuss in the next chapter.

In addition to underlining that the country had been beautiful, their brief historical accounts tended to focus on two key periods: when the family fled and the last few years, characterized by indiscriminate violence.

3.2.1 Everything we don't know

> I have never been to Somalia and since I was born, all I heard about Somalia was bad. I saw it with my naked eyes on TV: bomb blasts, people suffering, people

> crying. There was a time when my dad was alive, where he would forbid us from watching TV because it would affect us.
>
> My father used to praise Somalia a lot actually. He said it was a peaceful country before, a very good and beautiful country. I used to ask him: “Father, if Somalia was that good, why is it so bad now? Why are you out of your country? Why are you suffering here? You would be better over there.” He would not answer my questions.
>
> Luula, 18 years old

Youth who arrived in Kenya before the age of five usually have no recollection of Somalia and often warned me they had limited knowledge of the country and its history. Having spent their lives in Kenya and been educated with the Kenyan curriculum, they have learned the history and the geography – and the national anthem – of their country of asylum, as underlined by Yasin: “We have not learned the Somali geography. We have learned the Kenyan one. We know there are eight provinces in Kenya. We learned the history of Kenya, East Africa, Africa and the world. I have heard the names of a few places in Somalia, but really, I don’t know much.”

Like many other youth, Yasin is not uninterested in the history of Somalia – he later told me that he was staying up until midnight to listen to an educational programme on the history of Somalia on Star FM, a Somali-language radio station broadcasting in Kenya and Somalia. He just has limited access to information sources.[62] For this reason, when the Union of Somali Youth put together literacy classes for women in Kakuma I, they incorporated basic geographical and historical facts about Somalia into the English lessons. Students learn to answer basic questions such as: “How many rivers are there in Somalia? What are their names? When did the country become independent? Who was the first president? Who is the current president?” Twenty-three-year-old Aziz, who has searched for and “seen” his family hometown, Baidoa, on Google maps, is an exception. He could not see much, but knows where to find the city on a map.

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[62] Sources of information become very valuable in this context. I once sat with five or six Somali elders in one of the Dolo Ado camps in Ethiopia. To figure out where exactly they were from, I pulled a map of Somalia out of my bag. The men excitedly gathered around me, animatedly pointing at particular locations. They had no map. When I left, they asked if they could keep it.

Not only do young people lack formal knowledge of Somalia's history or geography, in many cases they also have a limited awareness of their families' path into exile. They attribute this to their fear of reviving bad memories by questioning their parents about the past. A number of parents confirmed these views. When I interviewed Aziz's mother, she said that the family hardly ever had time to get together and share stories about the past. Then she paused and added, "And really I don't like to think about the past. Sometimes, I tell them how we lived and how life changed, how my eldest sister was killed in front of me, how I lost track of their three eldest brothers, my sons, when we fled. I used to tell them that maybe some day they would come here, I would ask how they would react. But these are painful memories." Other youth stress that it is not usually the role of parents to transmit family stories, but that of grandparents, often absent from the camps: "Most of the times, we don't have conversations with our parents like you guys," explains Hajiro, 25. "In our culture, your parents will not tell you so many stories. You might overhear your mother telling a story to a neighbour. It is true that the Somali culture is one of storytelling, but normally, it is your grandparents who tell you those stories. If they are not around, you miss the whole thing."

Yet in most families I met, youth were acquainted, at least to some extent, with their family history. Miller et al. (2008: 71), speaking of Holocaust survivors, mention three patterns of family communication regarding the parents' experience: a "conspiracy of silence," over-disclosure, and parents who share their experience in a responsive manner, suited to the children's interest and capacity to understand and tolerate difficult stories. While Somali parents in Kakuma might not enjoy narrating their flight and talking of the past, their children are not completely left in the dark. Similarly, over-disclosure does not seem to be common. In most families, the topic is deemed sensitive, because it is likely to yield sorrow, but not to the extent of being beyond the bounds of discussion. Whereas youth usually speak of Somalia and the departure of their family with a fair degree of detachment, the same cannot be said of older people who have experienced the flight. Young people are sharing a story they have been told. Older people are remembering episodes of a difficult past. In a few instances, older men cried when talking about the life they had in Somalia and the one they were now offering to their children. This sense of loss did not come through in interviews with the youth in regard to Somalia (but it did when they spoke of being rejected for resettlement).

3.2.2 The old days

Every youth's account of the past is different, individualized, but they also commonly share a number of features. Like their parents, they typically begin their accounts with the description of a beautiful country that was plump with "vegetables, food, animals, milk, meat, everything was there, even the Indian Ocean with fish" (Omar). They frequently mention that their parents had a good occupation and owned a house, so their families were comfortable. The country attracted tourists and was "the way America is today. There was freedom, you would find women moving around freely at night" (Yasin). Stressing that their families have been better off seems to lessen the disgrace of living in a camp with very limited means, making the story of the past a key device for coping with the present. Once, after spending a full day at home with Aziz's family, I thanked them for their invitation. Aziz responded that they deserved no thanks: they could not invite me to a proper house and drive me home, as they could if this had taken place in Somalia. I had already encountered the theme of a 'lost paradise' with displaced teenagers in Somalia and, along with the loss of social standing, it seems widespread in narratives of exile (Grayson 2009; Meintel 1990: 62-64).

Deeqa was a few months old when her family fled from Kismayo. Her account captures a number of elements that would customarily be brought up when speaking of the past: Somalia's good life, the fighting, the family escape:

> [My father] says everything was good, there were cattle and milk, there was the ocean. There was a good president. I think his name was Mohammed Siyad. He was not discriminating people. After that, the people started contesting and fighting. There was tribalism. My grandmother and grandfather were killed in front of my father. He could not do anything. He was hiding. His brother was also killed. My father says we are lucky to be here, that if we had stayed there, we could have been killed. When my parents were coming to Kenya, they were walking. When they reached some place, they got a lift. They lived without registration in Kenya for about two months, looking for a place to settle. Then they heard that some refugees had been registered in the main office and that is when we went to camp Barawa [or Hatimy].

Deeqa's positive description of Siyad Barre is not at all atypical. Such nostalgia for the Barre era, usually depicted as a brutal and murderous dictatorship (Africa Watch 1990: 1; Menkhaus 2005: 5), can in part be explained by the fact that his removal from power signalled the end of what youth describe as a peaceful life in Somalia. It might also reflect the fact that their parents, and the Somali population in general, initially welcomed Siyad Barre's 1969 military coup and his socialist agenda – and his expressed will to eliminate tribalism and revive Somali nationalism, as well as to promote the country's self-reliance. Socio-economically, the first years of the revolution are usually depicted as positive, with the expansion of education through a literacy campaign (that turned into a drought-relief campaign), and the construction of infrastructure (Besteman 1996: 587; Ismail 2010: 101-12; Samatar 1997: 701-02). The regime's popularity started shrinking in the late 1970s, as it "failed to put together … a national project that could genuinely address the deep yearning of the people of the area, and, in the process, [has] mortally undermined [its] own acceptance and longevity" (Samatar 1985: 24). Despite having banned clannism, the president used it to consolidate his own power. As Barre lost some of his support, his rule became increasingly repressive (Horst 2006: 52-53; Samatar 1985).

Even though the old Somalia is portrayed in rather positive terms, these accounts are not about yearning for Somalia, quite the opposite. One day, I was discussing their arrival in Kenya with Khadra and Faarax, both in their early 20s. Khadra was explaining that back in Somalia, her father had a good job as a mechanic and a driver. Her parents owned a house.

> "They had everything. But the war came and they ran away. They even left their property there. We no longer have it. They took everything. I hate that place."
>
> "Do you dislike the country or the fighting?" asked Faarax.
>
> "I dislike even the country. I just want a cool place, without any fighting. I don't trust it there. Even if it became peaceful, I would never want to go back."

This reflects a very widespread view of Somalia as an unknown violent country. A number of young people had nothing positive to say about Somalia. Such focus on violence could be in part shaped by young people's will to justifiy their desire to move abroad, rather than return to Somalia. Some would add that they belonged to a minority group, which already made their lives difficult before the war and would make return impossible. The quick leap from the past to the present in Khadra's account is common, possibly because many are more familiar with the recent history of Somalia than that of the early 1990s, but also because the two are closely connected, the past structuring the present. Aziz says all he knows about Baidoa is that it was his hometown, and then he skips to the present: “That is where I was born and now, people are dying. You hear gunshots all the time. Refugees, when they look at Somalia, all they have is a negative perspective. All they see is killings, guns, people are murdered.”

Unlike Meintel (1990: 64), I did not encounter many narratives that stressed the heroic character of the flight. Displacement is somehow part of life and thus not an act of courage. It is lived through with stoicism. Nuradin’s account of his mother walking for 18 days without food is rather exceptional. Nonetheless, the resourcefulness of parents in finding a little money or food once they had reached the camp is a common feature of these accounts, as is the idea that they have lost a dignified way of living. The Mombasa camps hardly exist in their narratives. They are only mentioned in passing, possibly because the episode has little relevance in their present lives: most were too young to remember whether life was better there and they are just other camps, a short chapter in their long exile that does not have much to do with the reasons why they are living in Kakuma. In a number of instances, young people would ask their parents exactly which camp exactly they had lived in on the coast. Only older youth, such as Abdikadir, quoted earlier, have more detailed recollections of the camps.

3.2.3 The past present

During the period when I conducted my fieldwork, the situation in Somalia was improving slightly. A new prime minister had just been elected and the government of Kenya had started to advocate for the quick repatriation of Somali refugees. But violence was still leaving civilians dead or wounded and forcing people to flee (HRW 2013a). Young people’s depiction of the circumstances in Somalia was often oblivious to recent improvements and summarized in a few snapshots: indiscriminate violence; lack of education; early, forced marriage; forced recruitment and ludicrous governance. They would usually not paint an all-embracing picture, but focus on specific events that they had heard from newcomers to the camp and through the media.

One of the incidents that seemed to epitomize their view of Somalia was the bomb blast that killed more than 20 people during a Benadir University graduation ceremony in Mogadishu in

2009 (AP, 3 Dec. 2009). The attack was referred to surprisingly often, as if it exemplified not only how ruthless the violence was, but also how improbable education had become. The incident would also be used to illustrate that it would have been impossible for them to grow up, go to school and stay alive in Somalia.

Youth fairly frequently compared notes about the extreme lawlessness of the country and the fanaticism of al-Shabab. I once sat with Nuradin and Mahdi who were swapping stories. Nuradin related that combatants would sometimes go to someone's house and ask for their daughter. If the father refused, the whole family would be killed: "So you give her instead of having all your family killed. They use her for a month or two and then bring her back saying they no longer want her. Most girls in Somalia are being forcefully married like that." Mahdi quickly responded with a story about al-Shabab's farcical zeal: "The silliest story I heard is that samosas [a popular fried pastry usually filled with minced meat] had been forbidden because they are for Christians. It is a triangle. I was surprised, I laughed." I thought this was a made-up story, but it had actually been in the news in July 2011.[63]

3.2.4 Representing Somalia

Never having seen the country, youth sometimes refer to familiar spots to bring their imaginary Somalia to life. When trying to describe what he thought Somalia would look like, Faarax asked if I had ever been to the area of the camp where new (and better-looking, but still very modest) houses were being built for refugees arriving from Dadaab. "That's how I imagine it." Only a few mentioned having seen old pictures.

I realized during my photography classes that while students were perfectly able to identify Somalis on pictures through their features and dress codes, the same could not be said for the country of Somalia. During our first class, while discussing information that can be read from pictures, I showed the students photographs from Somalia and southern Sudan, the countries all but one of the students' families came from. I asked them what the picture was about, who was in it, where it was taken and so on. We started with a picture taken by a displaced teen, showing women and children sitting in a small room made of fabric. I knew these people had fled relatively recently and were living in a makeshift shelter on the road between Afgoye and Mogadishu, so I saw the picture as dire.

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[63] Reasons mentioned for the ban varied. Some said samosas were banned because of their shape, "linking it to a Christian symbol" (*Daily Nation*, 25 July 2011). Others reported that the ban was imposed because al-Shabab accused traders of using cat meat (BBC, 26 July 2011).

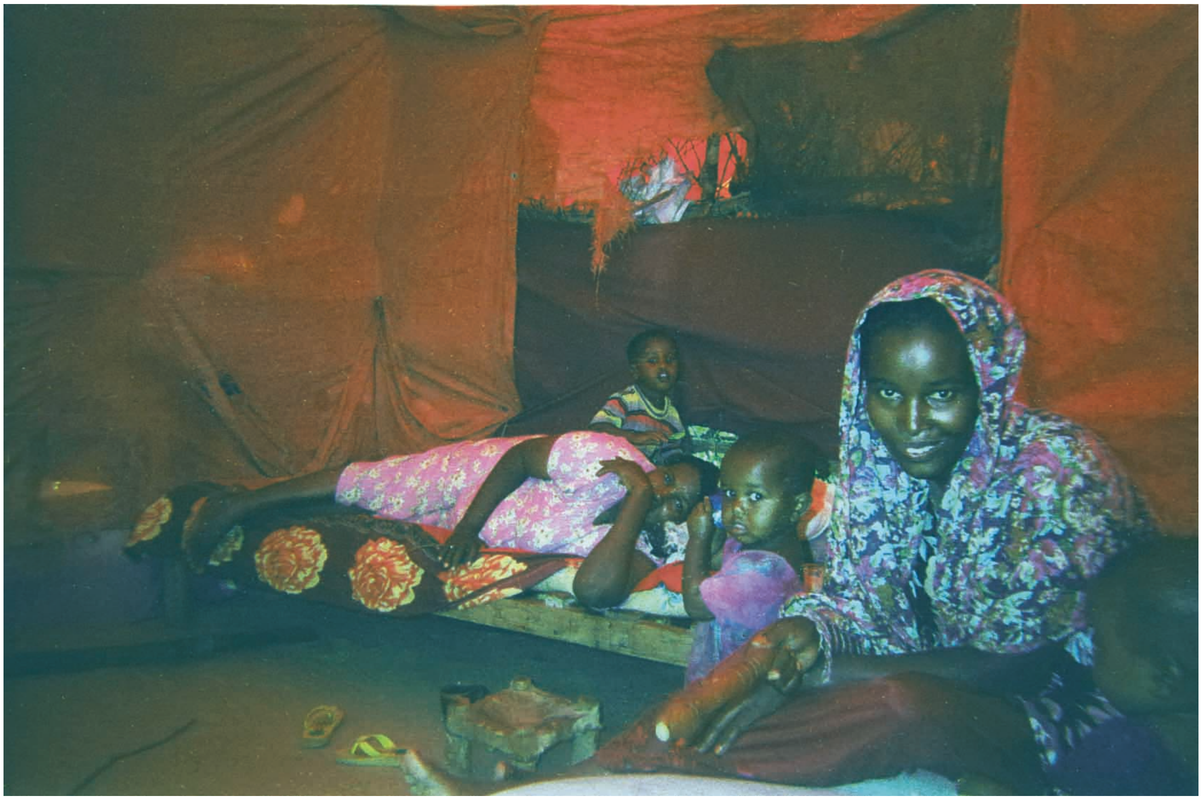

Figure 6: Displaced people in Afgooye. Courtesy Zahara.

The students said it was a happy picture of Somali women and their children in their home.

- Me: How do you know they are Somali?
- Students: From their clothing, their features and the way their house is made of fabrics.
- Me: What is happening?
- Students: Not much, they are resting. They are fine, they are smiling. They are home.

Then we looked at a picture of a Sudanese burial. Again, they had no hesitations: the picture was showing Sudanese men digging a grave in the sand. They knew because of the clothes and the skin colour of the men, and they recognized the ritual.

I continued with a picture of the half destroyed Mogadishu cathedral.

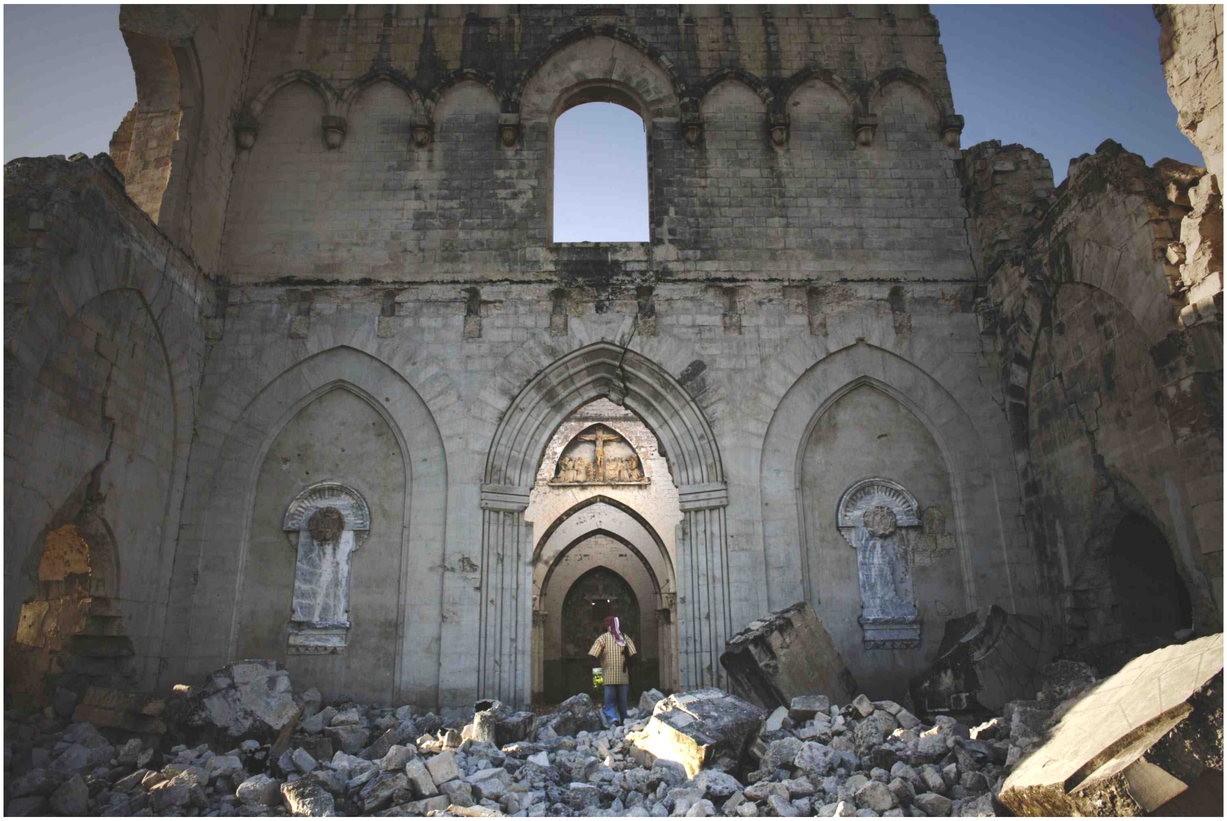

Figure 7: The Mogadishu cathedral. Courtesy J. Nga.

I thought they would recognize the building, as it is one of the widely known historical buildings in Somalia. No one knew what the picture was about or where it could have been taken. Once I explained what it was, they looked at the picture attentively, and asked about the cathedral. Similarly, when we looked at a photograph showing Somali women carrying loads of grass on a sandy street of Beletweyne, in central Somalia, they knew immediately that the women were Somali, but found it hard to believe that the sandy windy environment they were seeing in the picture, which bore a resemblance to Kakuma, was in fact Somalia.

I later asked the students if they had an old family portrait that they could bring to our next class. Only one student from South Sudan had one. Most of them have never seen photographs of their families before they fled or of the place where they lived. They have (sometimes embellished) mental images based on their parents' stories, but most have not completed them with actual pictures, apart from images about the latest violent incidents they sometimes see in the media. As means of communication are readily available in the camp, their lack of visual familiarity with Somalia was somehow unexpected.

Conclusion: The way we would have been

> I heard Somalia is a dirty country. It is a bad country. What I have seen on TV is miserable. Some people are being slaughtered like goats. If I had grown up there, I could be a killer.
>
> Yusri, 19 years old

Somalia's recent history has been marked by violence and instability that have forced millions of people to leave their homes. Significant numbers fled to Kenya, the closest country south, despite a harsh reception. A long journey with multiple incidents and stops brought some to Kakuma. Somali youth who grew up in Kakuma usually first lived in the more comfortable Mombasa camps that were closed by the government in the 1990s.

Told in youth's words, this turbulent history becomes a succinct, fluid one that focuses on the period when their families fled and the indiscriminate violence of the last few years. Their account seems to help them cope with the present and guide their aspirations for the future. While their parents' path into exile has affected their own lives and justifies their present situation, the violence of the recent years accounts for their limited desire to return to Somalia. In general, their short narratives are not tales of yearning for their homeland, but tales of relief. They are structured in a way that makes the present bearable by making it clear that Somalia, a paradise become a hell, was not the right place to grow up. Indeed, a very consistent feature in their accounts is that their parents' exile was morally justified: Somalia is still (rightly) described as a dangerous place and, had their parents stayed there, they would not have gone to school; they would have become accustomed to violence, been married very young, or forcibly conscripted, and might be dead.

Positive developments in Somalia do not significantly alter their perception, possibly because most focus on events that are in line with their narrative. While a number of family stories are not commonly shared because of their painful character, I do not think they are forgotten. They are part of those postmemories that make people's condition bearable. Remarkably few commiserate on the past and having been forced to flee, although many stress that back in Somalia their parents had a decent life, which seems to restore some dignity to their refugeeness. Their narratives are fairly uniform, probably because they have been shared many times before, and are consistent with those of their parents. Most do not see their parents' survival and displacement as heroic, possibly because, regardless of the conflict, Somalis have a tradition of movement and surviving in a challenging environment (Horst 2006; 2006a; Kleist 2004; Lewis 1994: 146).

In fact, fleeing has not only saved their lives, but is also equated to progress. Unlike the Hutu refugees studied by Malkki (1995), who had developed a powerful mythico-history and aimed at reclaiming their idealized native land, Somali youth who grew up in camps have little longing to return to an idyllic homeland. Going back to a country labelled as backwards does not fit into their idea of progress. If there is a mythical story about Somalia shared by young people, it is a very succinct one, highlighting that their parents were right to flee and that the further west one goes, the more "civilized" one becomes.[64] I once had this conversation with Xaawo:

- Me: How different are you from people who grew up in Somalia?
- Xaawo: Girls who recently came from Somalia, you can differentiate them from us, even from the distance. You can tell from the way they dress, they put on very big

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[64] Grabska (2011: 87) makes a similar observation with Nuer refugees in Kakuma: "Nuer women and men often interpreted the experience of being in Kakuma as the arrival of 'modernity' and 'civilisation' into their lives. The English words 'modern' and 'civilized' were often used by young refugee women and men to distinguish their new sense of their identities, and modes of behaviour, from those of people who had stayed behind in southern Sudan." The uncritical adoption by youth a language that associates traditional practices and the South to an uncivilized state and cultural change and lighter skin colour to the West, progress and civilization was at times rather disconcerting. I have not found an explanation to it, but it could be worth further investigating the influence of aid organizations (and their advocacy against a number of so-called traditional practices) and of the dream of resettlement (and the resulting tailoring of speech, especially with a Western researcher) in that respect.

clothes, like ninjas. Girls in the camp, they put lotion and herbs on their bodies that make them shine and look lighter. But girls from Somalia, they are very dark. We say they have not yet civilized. We are ahead of them.

- Me: What do you call civilized?
- Xaawo: Those who left their culture back and have changed. Those who were resettled, they are ahead of us. They think we are backwards.

The logic of progress would therefore take youth to the West and not back to Somalia. This may have prevented them from developing a strong mythico-history of their country. They are more expressive about the early days in the camp, maybe because they have more direct recollections: Kakuma is where they grew up. In this case, they have built a collective tale of their arrival and of taming an unwelcoming environment.

Chapter 3 – The process of civilization: Kakuma is another planet

> We came to Kakuma from camp Barawa [or Hatimy, one of the coastal camps] in 1997. It was such a surprise when we arrived here. We were expecting high buildings. There was only grass, sand, dust, snakes, scorpions and naked people. Those Turkana, we thought they were going to eat us. The same day that we came, the robbers came at midnight, shooting with guns. Bullets were flying. We didn't know where to run. There were not even houses. We were expected to build them. We slept under the tree for many nights. We just had to survive.
>
> Deeqa, 21 years old

The first time I heard this story from Deeqa, I did not know I would be listening to so many variants of the same tale that I would come to understand it as a foundational story. In addition to highlighting the bareness of the land, young people speaking of early days in Kakuma typically related that the local Turkana community was so destitute and hungry that people would break into refugees' homes at night not to steal their valuables but to drink fermenting *injera* batter. They also told of tall, dark southern Sudanese refugees fighting them because they believed the Somalis had a brotherly connection with northern Sudanese they were fleeing, due to their similar light skin and shared religion.[65] Somali refugees recounted that upon arrival, the hardship was so great that many refused to leave the buses they had boarded on the coast and that anyone who had the means to do so left the camp immediately. The story was about how "civilized" Somalis, mostly arriving from urbanized areas on the coast, tamed the "barbarians" and the hostile climate.[66] They would often go on to speak of learning to live together peacefully, establishing successful businesses and becoming the camp's most important national group, while phone networks were being established, contributing to the impression that Kakuma was increasingly connected to the world, and thus, civilized.

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[65] Sudanese refugees in Kakuma have mostly fled from the south of Sudan (now South Sudan) because of the civil war opposing the north and the south.

[66] Although I evoke Kakuma's wilderness and I use terms such as "civilized", "barbarians" and "progress" that are strongly reminiscent of the racist dichotomy between the exotic primitives living in some state of nature and

In Dadaab, I had often listened to refugees depicting the early days of the camp in a fairly positive light. A common account would go like that of Isaac, interviewed at the end of 2010 when he was 24: "When we arrived in 1992, life was okay. We received meat, oil, sugar, fish and good education. It started getting bad in 1998. Now, food is bad and not enough and the teachers are not well trained. We used to have land for farming, but it is no longer possible because the locals refuse." In Kakuma, Somali refugees do not idealize the early days of the camp, quite the opposite. This may be because the coastal camps they came from were more hospitable, but also because they turned up in Kakuma in a period when camp conditions throughout Kenya were getting tougher due to budget reductions (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 35).

Arriving in Kakuma in the late 1990s, Somalis are a minority in a primarily Sudanese camp. Over the years, the landscape of the camp changes and they become the majority. They do not necessarily feel part of a united community upon arrival. Although they speak the same language and share a nationality, they come from different places and are members of diverse families and clans. In this chapter, I argue that Somalis developed a broad sense of community by joining forces to face adversity together and tame the camp's foreign and isolating environment, but also by developing a collective narrative of this experience. The process of civilization included triumphing over insecurity, developing businesses and benefiting from functional communications. An increasing Somali presence also played a role in the conquest, changing Kakuma's configuration and dynamics. Because of this experience, the long-term residents can claim credit for surviving difficult times even though they were not in Somalia, which has helped to create meaningful connections among Somali refugees. The early days of

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the moderns, dear to the evolutionary anthropology of the 19th century (or to current proponents of a clash of civilizations, see Razack [2008: 148]), I am not suggesting that human societies are expected to develop in a given direction, from a pre-modern state to a modern state (thanks to technology and Western influence). I am using this language as it was literally used by Somali youth, but also because it conveys their idea of progress as taking them closer to the West (but without renouncing their way of living and being). Their adoption of this language was, at times, rather disconcerting. The conversation quoted at the end of the last chapter illustrates an appreciation of people's "evolution" through their skin colour and way of dressing.

the camp have been turned into a foundational story that makes the present more bearable and has helped to generate a sense of community. In comparison to the past, the camp has improved remarkably, and become "civilized." I contend that the development of a collective narrative of the shared experience of taming Kakuma and the formation of a community are intertwined (cf. Farah 1999: 276-280). While the shared experience brought people together, the collective interpretation and shaping of that experience strengthened social bonds and their feeling of interdependence, which in turn gave rise to an ever more consistent and mythical collective narrative.

Hyndman (2000: 139-140), referring to Kenyan camps, writes that "a refugee camp is not a community" but notices "evidence of communal interest and refugee cooperation – organized, for example, among refugees of common nationality, sub-clan affiliation, or proximate physical location." She claims that, unlike citizens who live in communities, refugees who are forced into camps where their movements are restricted and who have no historical relationship to the place where they live (the camp) nor any access to land, jobs, resources or livelihoods, cannot constitute a community, as the latter must be based on voluntary association. While agreeing that a camp as a whole may not be or become a community, I contend that multiple communities are likely to come to co-exist in such a setting – probably not from the outset, but as time passes and people develop social ties, share experiences and a common space. Others have suggested this previously (Agier 2008: 200-219; Malkki 1995: 242-246). Although refugees are not citizens and, while living in Kenyan camps, face serious restrictions of their rights in terms of freedom of movement or livelihood, these are debatable criteria for defining communities. In fact, the shared feeling of alienation may contribute to the formation of a community. Kepe (1999: 418-21) presents three key characteristics to describe local communities: shared locale, common ties (understood as a "web of kinship, social and cultural relations, p.421) and social interaction. McMillan and George (1986: 4) define "sense of community" by four elements: the feeling of membership; influence or the sense of mattering to the group's members; integration and fulfilment of needs or the feeling that as a member of a group, one's needs will be considered; and shared emotional connections through a common history and shared time, places and experiences. I hope to show that these are applicable to the Somali community that has formed in Kakuma and that this formation is closely linked with people's initial experience in the camp, as collectively interpreted and narrated. A number of authors have underlined the role of narratives and memories in the configuration of communities (e.g., Candau 2005: 433; Halbwachs 1925 [2002]). Others, such as Vigh (2006: 19) and Bourgois (2003: 433), have maintained that war and violence can generate a community of experience and bring lasting changes to the social landscape, observations reiterated by Jansen (2011: 90) in the context of Kakuma. However, while it has been noted that communities might come to exist in camps, that a shared experience of hardship might be conducive to community formation and that narratives contribute to the construction of cohesive community, the interweaving of these three elements has not been studied as such.

In the following pages, I will first present an overview of the changing human geography of the camp over the years. I will then consider the remarkably consistent narratives of refugees about the insecure environment in which they first found themselves and its evolution, notably in terms of businesses and communications; and, finally, discuss the cohesive effect of facing a harsh existence together. Although I will mainly be presenting the perspective of young people, it is worth noting that their narratives correspond to those of their parents, probably because of the collective nature of their construction. However, their feeling of belonging to a Somali community that at least partly transcends clans is not fully shared by the older generation, a matter upon which I reflect in the conclusion to this chapter.

1. A changing landscape

In 1991, about 17,000 boys from southern Sudan, aged 10 to 17, crossed the border into northwestern Kenya, fleeing the civil war between the northern-dominated national Islamic state and the Sudan People's Liberation Army from the south (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 126;

HRW 1994: 8, 18-20; Verdirame 1998: 15).[67] In 1992, a camp to house them was set up in Kakuma, located about one hundred kilometres away from the southern Sudanese border and one thousand from Nairobi. Until then, this poor locality in the Turkana district, with its inclement weather and persistent droughts that rendered agriculture difficult, had been inhabited by between 2,000 and 8,000 people (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 209; Otha 2005: 231; Verdirame 1998: 15-16). Within a few years, Kakuma's landscape had radically changed. Not only did trees grow, but shelters also sprang up, as the camp and the village rapidly expanded. By 2000, the town was home to some 40,000 Kenyans attracted by job and business opportunities and the camp provided shelter to 65,000 to 80,000 refugees. The boys had been joined by other southern Sudanese, as well as some 15,000 Somalis transferred from the coastal camps and refugees from Ethiopia and the Great Lakes region (Jamal 2000: 15, 83; Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 209; Verdirame 1998: 15). With the large-scale repatriation of South Sudanese from 2006 to 2008 and the progressive arrival of groups of Somali refugees, the latter became the most populous group in the camp (Jansen 2011: 240; RCK 2012: 75-76). By mid-April 2013, some 44.5 percent of Kakuma's 114,590 residents were Somalis (UNHCR 2013a).

Kakuma's physical and social landscape has changed significantly since the camp was set up in 1992, as refugees have been arriving and leaving, reflecting the ups and downs of Somalia, South Sudan and other countries in the region. In considering the population of the camp, it is important to bear in mind that not all people fleeing end up in a camp, as people try to stay away from them, in part because UNHCR avoids making them too comfortable, so as not to encourage potential refugees to choose asylum (Hyndman 2000: 24). For this reason, many Somali refugees have never lived in a camp, but self-settled irregularly in the vicinity of the border or in urban areas. Some refugees end up moving to a camp many years after fleeing because they have exhausted their resources. For instance, when Aziz's family arrived from Baidoa in 1995, they went to Nairobi where they stayed until 1998. It was only when they ran out of money that they agreed to go to Kakuma. When the Mombasa camps closed, many refused to be relocated to Dadaab or Kakuma or return to Somalia and simply stayed in one of

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[67] The boys, popularly known as the "Lost Boys," arrived in Kenya in a terrible state, after a long trek that had first taken them to refugee camps in Ethiopia, back to Sudan, then to Kenya. Many had fought and been orphaned during the Sudanese civil war (HRW 1994: 18-20; Verdirame 1998: 15).

Kenya’s cities, until they could no longer bear the expenses. This prompted one of Kakuma’s youth veterans, Mahdi, to comment: “Only poor people stay in Kakuma. If you have money, why would you stay here?” He is right: most refugees turning up in camps are poor (a few will manage to get richer while there) and have little education, as educated people are more likely to secure a job in urban areas, and thus to settle outside of camps. People avoid camps, but in the absence of any compelling alternatives, after weighing their (limited) options, they agree to go to one: in a camp, children have access to basic education and, in the case of Kakuma, there might be resettlement opportunities. In some instances, Kakuma may have been specifically chosen because minority groups considered it safer than Dadaab, since resettlement was deemed more likely to happen quickly there as the Somali population was smaller and thus, the resettlement process faster, and in a few cases, people had relatives in the camp. In that respect, then, even for the poorest refugees, camps at least to some extent represent a choice (although it is often between bad and worse).

The fact that not all Somali refugees arrived in Kakuma at the same time is important. With each wave of arrivals, the Somali population grew and diversified. Newcomers shared recent stories of violence in Somalia with the “old” refugees, sustaining the (fact-based) perception that Somalia is unsafe. A hierarchy based on camp experience also developed.

1.1 Layers of arrival

When 15,000 Somalis from the coastal camps, many of them from minority groups, arrived in Kakuma between 1995 and 1999, they were met by a very small number of Somalis who had come during the first few years of the camp and many more southern Sudanese (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 209; RCK 2012: 76). A number of families quickly left to settle in urban areas. According to UNHCR, by 2000, some 12,000 Somalis were living in Kakuma. In 2002, they were joined by over 12,000 Somali Bantus relocated from Dadaab by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for purposes of resettlement to the United States (officials feared that conducting interviews in Dadaab with refugees who were targeted for resettlement could create dangerous tensions with those who were not part of the process [IRIN, 9 May 2002; RCK 2012: 76; USCR 2004]). Most of this group departed in the following two years, but those whose applications were rejected stayed in Kakuma (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 229). Following the resettlement of the Somali Bantu, three other Somali minority groups, the Madiban (or Midgan), the Barawa and the Ashraf, were picked out for resettlement from Kakuma. In 2006, a large-scale resettlement programme to the United States (U.S.) got under way, targeting Somalis who had been in the camps for a long time. Thousands of refugees left and are still leaving.

While "old" refugees were heading west, newcomers were settling in Kakuma. Indeed, from 2007 onwards, small numbers of Somalis began to arrive on their own from Dadaab, Nairobi and Somalia, advised by refugees in Kakuma that living conditions and resettlement opportunities were better than in Dadaab. Others who were registered in Kakuma but living in Nairobi came back for the 2010 re-registration (or verification). In 2008 and 2009, UNHCR, the Department of Refugee Affairs and IOM organized the transfer of some 13,500 refugees from Dadaab to decongest the crowded camps (DRA circ. 2010; Kagiri, 3 July 2008; RCK 2012: 76; UNHCR 2009). Among the newcomers, some had previously been in the Mombasa camps, had repatriated once and were fleeing again – confirming to long-term inhabitants that their parents' decision to stay in Kenya was a wise one.

Between 2006 and 2008, while the Somali population was growing, the number of southern Sudanese diminished. Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army and the Government of Sudan in 2005, some 38,000 Sudanese returned to southern Sudan (Ayiemba 2009: 9). At first, the camp's population shrank quickly enough for NGOs to start scaling down, and even to discuss pulling out. This, however, was a short-lived phase, as thousands of Somalis began arriving. The combined movements led to swift demographic change. At the beginning of 2006, 74,000 Sudanese made up 80 percent of Kakuma's population. Numbering 12,600 or 14 percent of the population, Somalis were the second largest national group (UNHCR 2005). By the end of 2009, the balance had tipped. Sudanese were down to some 17,000, or 27 percent of the population, and were outnumbered by the 38,000 Somalis (over 60 percent of the population) (UNHCR 2009a).

In late 2012 and early 2013, another 2,000 Somali refugees were transferred from Dadaab to Kakuma for resettlement purposes: Dadaab was deemed too dangerous for officials to visit to conduct resettlement interviews. A number of Somali refugees who were registered in

Kakuma but living in Nairobi were also coming back to the camp as a result of the government's relocation directive. In December 2012, the government of Kenya, holding refugees collectively responsible for insecurity in Nairobi, stated that they should be living in Dadaab and Kakuma camps (GoK 2012). Kenya did not go ahead with the forced relocation plan, but the directive unleashed a wave of abuses in the form of harassment and extortion against refugees by security forces, compelling many refugees to leave the city (RI 2013; HRW 2013). Thousands decided to repatriate to Somalia, while others returned to camps where they were already registered (Reini, 8 Feb. 2013; UNOCHA 2013). At the same time, South Sudanese started arriving again in significant numbers. From mid-October 2012 to mid-April 2013, the registered population in Kakuma increased by more than 11,000 people to nearly 115,000. Somalis remained the largest group but were no longer the majority, making up 44.5 percent of the population (UNHCR 2012b; UNHCR 2013a).

Ranking upon arrival often comes up in conversations and the slightest differences count in the self-positioning of refugees. Older refugees see themselves as camp-wise,[68] describing newcomers as unseasoned and still traumatized by their escape from Somalia. Conversely, newcomers emphasize that, unlike those who grew up in the camp, they know Somalia and the Somali culture and language, but also stress that camp residents have had a better access to education and have learned English and Swahili. Maybe more importantly, the length of one's camp stay is used to highlight how unfair the resettlement process is. For example, Xaawo, who arrived in 1995 from Marafa, observes that she is among the Somali refugees who have been in the camp the longest, as nearly all the others have left a long time ago and most of the remaining "old" ones "only" arrived between 1996 and 1998.

The social makeup of the camp has been changing since its opening. Between the late 1990s and 2013, Kakuma camp not only went from being predominantly southern Sudanese to largely Somali, but also became ever more ethnically diverse. The various groups of arriving Somalis have altered the clan dynamics and intergroup equilibrium over time.

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[68] I once overheard an interesting conversation between two of my journalism students. One had been in the camp for the last twenty years. She was explaining to the other, who had arrived a few months earlier, how to navigate the camp, giving her tips about getting a shelter, staying safe and finding a job.

1.2 A changing human geography

In its first few years of existence, the camp went from a small Sudanese population of 17,000 to some 58,000 refugees of various origins in 1998. The density of population in inhabited areas of the camp was high: in some blocks, it reached 400 people per hectare, a stark contrast with the 0.02 inhabitants per hectare in the area (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 208). By 2006, nearly 95,000 refugees were registered in Kakuma, and there were more than 100,000 by 2013 (Jansen 2011: 8; UNHCR 2013a). As a result of this growth in population, two new sections, Kakuma II and III, were opened in 1997 and 1999. When the Somali Bantus came from Dadaab, Kakuma IV was set up. Each new section was established next to the one most recently opened, always a little further from the offices of humanitarian organizations and from the Town of Kakuma, expanding the camp over more than ten kilometres. Even though all additions were completed by 2002, there are still stark differences between the earlier and later parts of the camp. Kakuma I is undeniably the most populous and richest area, with bigger and livelier markets. The further one gets from the older parts of the camp, the less populated and the less green it becomes.[69]

With time, the Somali population has grown. Groups of newcomers were often settled together in a given area, creating “villages” of a sort within the camp. Some of the first Somali refugees came when Thika camp, on the outskirts of Nairobi, closed in 1995. They were settled in Kakuma I, with the Oromo and the Sudanese, close to the NGO and UNHCR compound. Unhappy with the locality, many moved to the other side of the main road, around an area that is now known as the Mogadishu market. During the next two years, they were joined by refugees relocated from the coastal camps as a result of the closure of Utange, Marafa and Swale Nguru (or Benadir) (Verdirame 1998: 12). The newcomers were mostly Benadiri and Darod. The Barawa from Hatimy camp came next, in 1998, and settled in an area called Phase I, in the newly opened Kakuma II (sited next to Kakuma I and divided into three phases). They were joined by Bajuni refugees from Kwa Jomvu. Somali Bantus and other minority groups were also part of the movement. Phases II and III also received a number of Somalis. When the Somali Bantus were transferred from Dadaab for resettlement, they went to Kakuma IV, specially opened for them in 1999. Many of those who were not resettled stayed there.

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[69] For an engaging chronological walk through the camp, see Jansen 2011: 75-80.

For a number of years, no significant arrivals of Somalis took place. Somalis were a minority in a Sudanese camp. Then Sudanese started going home. "In 2007, the landscape of the camp was totally different," remarked an elected camp leader, Dayib. The population had indeed gone down to just over 60,000, with more than 30,000 refugees having left the camp in the previous two years (UNHCR 2005 and 2007a). Another 10,000 would leave in the coming year, before the camp population started growing again (UNHCR 2008a and 2009a). "It felt very empty past the main hospital. Former southern Sudanese neighbourhoods were suddenly very quiet. Then Somalis started coming. Now, it is crowded again." Indeed, starting in 2007, thousands of arriving Somalis, many of them members of the Hawiye clan family, settled in Kakuma I, zone II, on plots vacated by departing Sudanese. Others went to Kakuma II, III and IV. Hundreds of Congolese also came, as fighting was going on in the Democratic Republic of Congo. By 2013, the camp had reached its full capacity of 100,000 people. Not only were Somalis still arriving, a number of them because of the government's relocation order, but significant numbers of people were also coming from South Sudan, changing the landscape of the camp once again.

Newcomers were – and still are – assigned plots by the camp management. In the early days, members of a given ethnic group arriving at the same time were usually established together. The way refugees are arbitrarily settled in a camp has been criticized by Harrell-Bond (1986: 97) for being oblivious to refugees' previous social organization, and by Malkki (1995: 137) for segregating refugees by "types" or "kinds," just as a zoo keeper would not "put creatures of different species in a single cage." While it is true that new residents are arbitrarily assigned plots, subsequent movements in and out of Kakuma – especially once fairly large numbers of Somalis began to be resettled in 2006 and left or informally sold their plots to other refugees – have allowed people to move within the camp, thus reordering its social configuration. Some moved to other neighbourhoods to be close to kinsmen, others relocated to get closer to the compounds of humanitarian organizations so as to gain easier access to them and to greater work opportunities. This has turned Kakuma I into the most densely populated part of the camp – and the one that experiences the most water shortages, given the crowding. Refugees often see Kakuma I as more developed. One of the journalism students once described Kakuma II as “a distant and not so crowded place where people must be bored. There is not even a properly functioning [cell phone] network!”

With the ongoing internal and external movements of population, neighbourhoods have become more mixed. For newcomers the camp still feels rather segregated, as most neighbourhoods are home to particular ethnic groups and remain relatively homogeneous, but separation between ethnic communities used to be greater in the past, according to old-timers. Over the years, the Bajuni and Somali Bantu areas have continued to be known as such, but are not strictly occupied by those two groups. The degree of coexistence of refugees of various nationalities actually seems rather exceptional, even though refugees noticeably choose to live close to other people of the same nationality when they relocate themselves within the camp, regardless of the UNHCR approach. Within ethnic communities, movement has occurred inside the camp. A number of newly arrived people have joined “old” groups of refugees, often buying or renting a piece of land from another refugee for an increasingly substantial amount of money so as to live in the neighbourhood of their choice rather than settling on an assigned plot. Refugees buy or rent plots that have been lent by the Kenyan government, even though it is formally illegal to rent or sell land that inhabitants do not own. Prices fluctuate and increase when the population grows. During my stay in the camp, prices were rising quickly, as many Somalis were coming back from Nairobi because of the relocation directive and needed a place to live. Some said they bought plots years ago for a few thousand shillings, but that they were now selling for as much as 80,000 KSh (nearly 1,000 CAD) and rents were up to 3,500 KSh a month (some 40 CAD).

The commercialization of plots is one of many signs testifying to the informal system and economy that exist in Kakuma. In a camp environment, humanitarian assistance is an important resource but it is not everything: refugees organize their own economy. The resettlement of Somalis contributed to this development, as refugees in Kakuma started receiving remittances from resettled relatives (which also strengthened the connection between the camp and the West, see Chap. 6). With time, refugees have reorganized the camp’s socio-economic landscape to adapt it as much as possible to their way of life. While the camp itself is permanent, its population and its organization are constantly changing, modifying the camp's configuration. In the following pages, I will discuss the evolution of Kakuma's environment and economy over the years.

2. Becoming Kakumians

Somalis who arrived in Kakuma from coastal camps in the late 1990s encountered a mainly southern Sudanese population and an otherwise desolate environment that they would have to make their home by appropriating and shaping its landscape. Landscapes, writes Bender (2000: S104), "never stand still." They are always in the making and the way they are perceived depends on the position of the viewer at that point in time (p.S106). When he first came to Kakuma from the coast, 31-year-old Abdikadir saw it as "another planet." And it *was* another planet: insecurity was high, the weather harsh, there were no phones, no cars – but things were changing. For one, security gradually improved. Moreover, the population kept growing, and so did the proportion of Somalis. There were soon more businesses, telephones, Internet cafés and taxis. A parallel economic system developed, complementing humanitarian aid. Yet, initially, insecurity and fear prevailed and had to be dealt with. The collective narrative of arrival in Kakuma, which developed through an ongoing interactive process of retelling and remodelling the initial experience, emphasizes the ways in which Somalis joined forces to tame their environment. This shared ordeal helped to forge an enduring sense of being part of a community of experience and to generate social cohesion between Somalis who did not initially see themselves as part of a united community. As in any kind of narrative, the story was given a shape; events deemed meaningful were selected, while others were forgotten, reflecting the community's interpretation of a lived reality (see Augé [1998] on memory and forgetting).

2.1 Triumphing over insecurity

Insecurity features prominently in accounts of the early days in the camp. "We were living in terror," relates Abdikadir, theatrically. "When we came here, my parents compared the fear with that in Somalia but they said it was better there because at least we could speak with the attackers: we spoke the same language. Here, we couldn't. When you reached the age of eleven, you were put on guard duty. We were doing shifts. You kept hearing that your neighbour had been attacked, that someone was killed in Kakuma I, someone in Hong Kong, another one in Phase I [neighbourhoods of Kakuma I]. You could be killed any time." Young people recount that their families fled from a war zone in search of safety but found only insecurity. They mention the Turkana who attacked them to steal food or cooking utensils. Many speak of how neighbours were killed in crimes that were never solved. In addition, Somalis often remark that the Sudanese greeted them as potential assailants. They describe how lethal conflicts ended up affecting the whole camp, with entire neighbourhoods being burned down. Then, as kids in school, they feared the Sudanese boys, who, besides being tall and the majority, they believed included large numbers of former combatants from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who could harm them.[70]

However extreme this may sound, it is consistent with studies from the late 1990s. At that point, the level of violence in Kakuma was depicted as "unacceptably high" by UNHCR (Crisp 1999: 16) and merited mention in several reports and research documents (e.g., Crisp 1999; Jamal 2000; Obura 2002; UN General Assembly 2001: 18b; Verdirame 1998). Tensions were acute between the various national groups, between ethnic groups of the same nationality and with the Turkana. Security reports from that period include murders and attacks that seriously wounded dozens of people. For example, in September 1998, a clash between Sudanese and Somalis killed two and more than 50 houses and shops were burned down in the Somali neighbourhood (Crisp 1999: 11). In 2000, four arson attacks in the Somali area razed some 700 shelters and displaced thousands (USCR 2001). A security report from 12 August 1999 reads:

> On 6 March 1998, a 40 year-old refugee from Bahr-el-Ghazal [named Mr. [] was shot dead. In the same night, unknown gunmen invaded the Bajuni Somali community and took away 13 goats. On the evening of 9 March 1998, an inter-ethnic fight broke out between Sudanese Dinka Bahr and Dinka Bor, resulting in serious injuries to 155 persons. On the evening of 9 March 1998, Mr. [] was stabbed dead with a sword. On the evening of 15 March 1998, a lone gunman shot a Ugandan refugee in the arm while being pursued by Ethiopian community local guards. On 22 March 1998, at around 18.00 hours, young men of the Sudanese Nuer community attacked the Ethiopian community with traditional weapons and 29 people were seriously injured. (quoted by Crisp 1999: 3)

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[70] While the perceived threat was possibly inflated, it is likely that the camp was, at least to some extent, militarized and under the command of the SPLA (Polman 2008 [2010]: 110).

At that time, the head of the UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service wrote that the situation kept deteriorating and that, in contrast to other camps where residents spoke of their desire to go home and have better services and assistance, the refugees' focus in Kakuma was on insecurity (Crisp 1999: 3-4). Insecurity stemmed from a number of elements. The camp had been established in a chronically insecure and particularly poor region that was devoid of infrastructure and where state authority was limited (Buchanan-Smith and Lind 2005: 4). The arrival of a sizeable population with whom the local community had no ethnic or cultural ties led to a "geographical concentration of the violence" (Crisp 1999: 20). Referring to the Kakuma and Dadaab camps, Crisp continued: "There are simply more items to steal, more people to rob and more women to rape in and around the camps than in other parts of the two provinces." Even though refugees' living conditions in camps were difficult, they were easier than those of the host community: they at least had access to food, water and health care. Some could hire Turkana as house-helps, since they had more wealth than the local population (Crisp 1999: 19). This imbalance triggered tensions between hosts and refugees. Within the camp, social cohesion, which tends to characterize peaceful communities, was limited in this very heterogeneous population. The camp was and still is home to refugees from over a dozen different countries, including Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, and many more ethnic groups. In some cases, distrust and rivalries were entrenched between ethnic groups or clans of the same nationality, notably between Hutu and Tutsi from the Great Lakes region, Dinka and Nuer from southern Sudan and Darod and Hawiye from Somalia. Conflict and tensions also developed between national groups, such as southern Sudanese Christians and Somalis, or Eritreans and Ethiopians. To some extent, war remained visible in the camp, as former combatants had settled there and SPLA commanders came to visit their families living in Kakuma. In addition, trauma from the past and frustration linked to encampment sparked violent behaviours (Jansen 2011: 86, 91). The accumulation of conflicts and tensions created a very volatile atmosphere that led in turn to further confrontations (Crisp 1999: 19, 23, 25, 30, 33).

Refugees and aid workers claim that from the mid-2000s on, things improved. The security apparatus was beefed up with an expansion of the police force and the General Service Unit (a paramilitary wing of the Kenyan military and police). Refugee communities created their own security system, protecting their neighbourhoods with gates and fences and initiating community patrols, thus creating group boundaries. As a way of easing tensions with the host community, aid organizations distributed rations to impoverished people and children, and provided jobs to those with skills. Social and trade connections that developed among refugees and with the host community also contributed to the normalization of relations: the host community started selling animals and wood in the camp, while refugees hired Turkana for manual work and sold goods to Turkana and fellow refugees. The Japanese anthropologist Itaru Otha (2005), who has been conducting research in Kakuma since 1978, confirms this observation. He maintains that despite occasional conflicts, refugees and their hosts found ways of coexisting that were beneficial. These relationships were important enough that an NGO staff member working in Kakuma since 2001 mentioned that when the Sudanese returned home between 2006 and 2008, insecurity in the camp increased, which he believed was a result of the host community's attempt to compensate for their loss of income. Many say that people simply learned to coexist across ethnic and national divisions. Idris, a 40-year-old Somali from the Ethiopian Ogaden, recalls that in the coastal camps and in the early days of Kakuma, there were tribal clashes between Somalis. "If something was going on in Mogadishu, people would fight here. It stopped in 2001. People realized they had the same interests and problems. That is when they started saying that they all were brothers and sisters and had to help one another."

When refugees recount their arrival in a threatening environment, it is a story that gives meaning to their lives: they survived danger together, by joining forces as a group. They overcame a harsh environment, took partial command of it and invested it with some sense. Moreover, having common experiences and ending up with a shared history and references, they created new communities of experience. Idris' comment on how Somalis realized "that they all were brothers and sisters and had to help one another" is telling in that respect. In the words of 27-year-old Omar, this forced children in school to look beyond clans and become Somalis: "In primary school, you might find that Sudanese are 105 in a class, while we are 3 Somalis. This means that even though you are from different clans, you better be friends." Adversity thus led to changes in the spatial arrangement of the camp and to the formation of socially cohesive communities, as camp residents grouped together to protect themselves.

"War," writes Vigh (2006: 19), "evidently leads to a (relative) polarisation of the conflicting social categories, but it also works on a more subtle level generating social formations and bonds as people find themselves sharing the ordeals of flight, refuge, combat or post-war difficulties, generating communities of experience that are as enduring as they are profound."

Arriving in Kakuma and having to face the Sudanese and the Turkana is the metaphorical war that youth lived through. Even though they grew up away from Somalia, like their peers there they also experienced insecurity. Violence made daily life difficult, and continues to do so, but, as a side effect, has helped to recreate communities. "People do not simply 'survive' violence as if it remained outside of them," remarks Bourgois (2003: 433). Indeed, it leaves marks, shapes them. Somalis have united with other Somalis, despite internal divisions, to fight for their survival. This does not mean that internal tensions have disappeared – a number of Somalis from minority groups still feel discriminated against by majority clans, and refugees reported tensions over the camp leadership between members of major clan families, the Darod and the Hawiye – but there is a push towards collaboration and unity among Somalis who, to some extent, feel that their national origin has become an important marker and implies a shared fate.

2.1.1 The commonness of violence

Insecurity is not merely a story from the past, however: it remains a topic of constant discussion and concern. Although people say the situation has improved, they also underline that in addition to community clashes that still occur from time to time,[71] everyday violence[72] is part of their life and impacts their lifestyles as it would in many poor and densely populated areas. When I asked the journalism students to think of possible topics for news stories and features, a significant proportion came up with security-related stories. They reported patterns in insecurity (for example, it increases before Christmas, as more money circulates in the camp and people need extra resources for the celebrations). They also noted that the intelligence services of several countries were present in the camp, adding to their discomfort, and that the Department of Refugee Affairs sometimes intimidates refugee leaders (see Chap. 7, on trust and mistrust). They also mentioned rumours of police officers, dressed in civilian clothes, beating refugees in the camp, incidents that would go unreported owing to refugees' fears and their belief that no in-depth investigation would occur. Similarly, when I asked the photography students to illustrate something they disliked in the camp, several talked of insecurity. Suad, 17, photographed the gates, which are closed at night:

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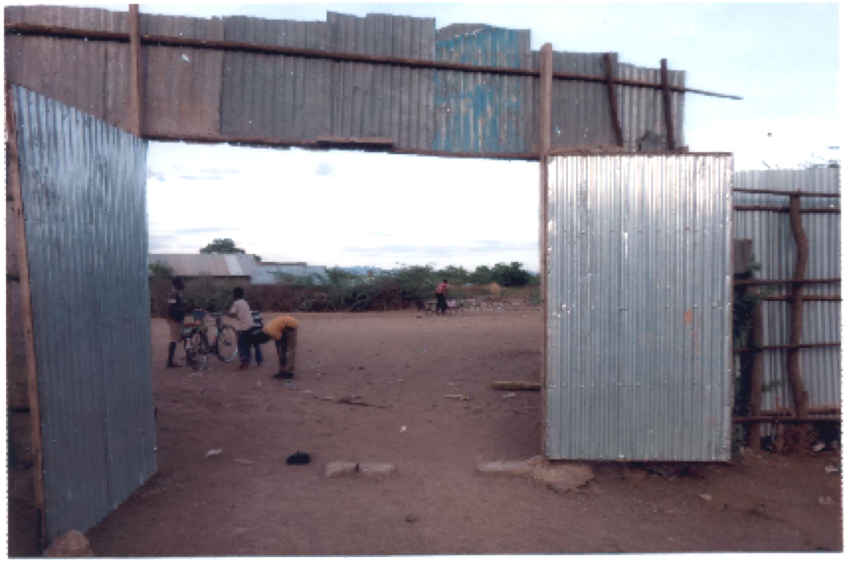
[71] For example, in early 2012, a fight between children playing football sparked a community conflict between Sudanese Nuba and the Dinka that killed one. In June 2013, fighting between Sudanese Murle and the Nuer killed six (e-mail from UNHCR, 23 June 2013).

[72] I have borrowed the concept of "everyday violence" from Bourgois (2003: 426) who, drawing from Scheper-Hughes (1992 and 1996) defines it as "[d]aily practices and expressions of violence on a micro-interactional level: interpersonal, domestic and delinquent. [The concept allows one] to focus on the individual lived experience that normalizes petty brutalities and terror at the community level and creates a common sense of ethos of violence."



What I dislike in This Camp

One thing That I dislike in This Camp is insecurity
because There is no security in This Camp. At night if
you dont closs your gate, some thieves come. They may
Kill you or may take all your Properties
In your house.

Figure 8: Metal gates at the entrance of a neighbourhood. Courtesy Suad.

Refugees typically accuse the police of coming long after the attackers are gone. However, the representative of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, a local NGO that advocates for the rights of refugees and displaced people, believes that one of the biggest challenges may originate not with the police, but with the refugees themselves. They do not always know how to report criminal matters or to whom.

There seems to be a relatively high level of “normal” everyday violence. The house of one of my Somali photography students was broken into one night. The attackers knocked down one of the gates surrounding the house. Instead of reporting the crime to the police, the family built new and higher walls of metal sheets around their compound and mentioned the incident to Somali elders. Another student showed up one day with pictures of a Congolese man who had just been seriously beaten by a mob accusing him of stealing cooking utensils. I once had a discussion with a refugee who told me he was lucky: the police had only abused him once since he had arrived in Kakuma less than a year before. He was beaten for not jumping off the road for a passing police car, and described this as an ordinary event. Another 20-year-old South Sudanese refugee spent a few days in the communal jail for being in a fight on the basketball court. At food distribution centres and in the Field Posts, it is not uncommon for guards to beat refugees to force them to stay in line. Yet, the head of protection for UNHCR, tasked with protecting refugees’ rights, remarks that although the police-to-refugee ratio is far below the standard of one officer for 460 inhabitants, the camp is statistically safer than any city of a comparable size in the world. Of course, it is difficult to assess the reliability of any figures, as a number of crimes appear to go unreported.

Everyday violence means that staying home in the evening is perfectly normal, especially for girls. By 8 p.m., nearly all shops are closed and the market area deserted. Aid workers are long gone, as they have to be out of the camp by 6 p.m. While boys say they could visit their friends in the neighbourhood, girls do not set foot outside at night. Luula, 18, explains: “When it reaches seven our gates are closed. You cannot go anywhere. Maybe boys can, but if you are a girl, you don’t step outside to buy something. It is scary. If you go there and you have a phone, you have gold earrings, they will beat you and take them.” I could not spend any significant amount of time in the camp after dark. My few visits were with the FilmAid team showing films in the camp at night. The camp was safe enough for people from the surrounding area to come to see the film and walk back afterwards, but all other streets and market areas were deserted.

In general, even during the day, girls avoid walking alone. Many explain that a number of girls have been deterred from attending high school by the long walk through sparsely populated areas that it entails. The walk from Kakuma II is deemed risky: girls say they fear being raped on the way and state that in the past, there have been rapes in the area. I do not know to what extent the fear is founded on facts, but I do know it is real enough that girls try to always be escorted. It is customary to walk girls back – accordingly, refugees generally accompanied me all the way back to the NGO compound. (Interestingly, it was often during these walks that refugees would start telling me about people I had just been with, offering different versions of the stories I had been told.) For a young woman, living alone is unusual and seen as hazardous. Twenty-three-year-old Zahra is the only young Somali women I met who did so. She is an atypical Somali woman in her blunt refusal to conform to social rules she disagrees with – to the extent that other members of the community say that she is not a "real" Somali. She explained that everyone in the community knew she was living on her own: "Men are always after you, because they know you are alone, with no parents. They don't have any respect. People know I come home late from work [for an NGO], around 10, when people are already asleep. You never know what will happen to you. It is stressful. I open my door very fast, I make sure everything is ok. But my door is weak. Someone could just give it a quick push and come in."

The sense of security or insecurity creates new geographical and temporal borders within the camp: some neighbourhoods are deemed dangerous – more so at certain times of day – and are therefore avoided. For example, in Kakuma I, the areas around the distribution centres are considered unsafe at night. This also leads to adjustments in rituals: weddings are sometimes celebrated early, so girls can be home before night falls.

Violence has had, and still has, an impact on daily life in Kakuma but, paradoxically, has helped Somalis built some social cohesion. They have united with one another, regardless of their clan, to protect themselves from danger. Tensions still occur, but there is a stronger feeling of belonging to a community. Having lived through a difficult period in Kakuma also means that refugee youth feel they have gone through their own war, like other Somalis, as some of them expressed to me.

2.2 The development of business and communication: The ethos of Somalis

Let us look back at the arrival of Somali refugees in the late 1990s. Refugees receive humanitarian assistance but that is never enough. Food rations are inadequate: they are meagre and contain no meat, no fruit, no vegetables. Children need books, pens and uniforms to go to school. Money is essential for dowries and marriages, and for medical fees, as the camp hospital is deemed unreliable. As in all long-term camps, a parallel economy develops in which humanitarian assistance counts as one important resource among several.

New arrivals first sell what they have. Aziz's family, for example, was relatively wealthy. His parents owned "a pharmacy, a big house, vehicles and shops" in Somalia. They did not trade everything when the family was in Nairobi, but did so progressively to cover extra expenses in Kakuma. More than a decade later, everything has been sold except their family house in Baidoa. His mother explained that once their belongings were disposed of, they had to rely on the assistance provided by UNHCR. Since that was insufficient, she opened a small shop where she traded sugar and water in plastic bags. Everything is marketable in the camp, from plots of land to food rations, from tap water in plastic bags to sex.

In this section, I will discuss the growth of the camp's economy through the opening of shops and the development of means of transport, electricity and communication networks, enabling people to watch television and speak to relatives around the world. I approach this from a Somali perspective, thus paying special attention to the development of Somali businesses. Before these blossomed, there was a thriving Ethiopian market, but Somalis tend to be oblivious to it. In showing how Kakuma gradually took on urban features, I seek to emphasize the role played by the establishment of prosperous businesses by Somalis in the process of taming the wilderness of Kakuma and turning it into a Somali area. This is an important part of the collective narrative of arrival and survival, because of the importance that Somalis assign to their business skills. Like many others, Warsame boasts that "Somalis, wherever they

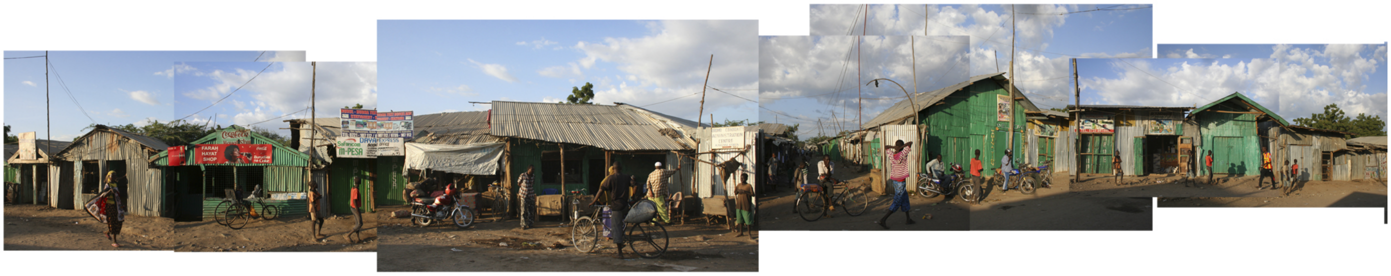


Figure 9: The Somali market in the early morning. Author's photographs.

are living, start businesses. They will start with one hundred shillings [approx. 1.25 CAD] and build a real business. People take a few months to learn and then they manage. Now, we are even giving money to UNHCR: we are closing that *lagga.*[73]" The development of communications that helped connect the camp to the world holds a similar place in the Somali discourse.

2.2.1 The growth of the camp economy

> When we first came [in 1997], if someone was sick, we had to carry them on our back. Then we got a wheelbarrow. Then we got a cart, then a bicycle, then motorbikes. Now, we have cars.
>
> Guleed, 47 years old

Upon arrival in Kakuma, refugees had to rely on the support of UNHCR. People quickly realized this meant being very poor and that aid was insufficient to provide a decent life. In that deserted land, services and commodities were scarce or unaffordable. There was no electricity, no phone network, no means of transport in the camp. Young people, such as Khadra, 20, usually remember that period as one of extreme poverty, when they could not afford meat, had to trade a part of their food ration for vegetables and had "no money to buy shoes." Having animals was not an option, as refugees are not allowed to own them in

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[73] *Lagga* is the word commonly used to designate the Tarach river, a seasonal stream that runs along the camp and all the way to Kakuma village. It is usually empty, but sometimes floods, destroying refugee and Turkana shelters. Somali refugees initiated the construction of a dam to prevent flooding. They later went to UNHCR and were given funding to continue the project. However, they did initially invest their own time and money.

Kakuma; it was feared that this would only increase tensions with the Turkana. And trying to grow crops in such an arid environment is virtually pointless.

Many traded anything they could. A woman in her fifties remembers, "We started thinking about improving our lives, we established small businesses that grew, we sold vegetables, food, sugar, rice and pasta. Things slowly improved." Some with education managed to get a job with one of the humanitarian organizations. They were paid an "incentive,"[74] amounting to a small portion of a real salary. Idris, who had been teaching in Mombasa, was hired as a teacher upon arrival in Kakuma. He received 1,875 KSh a month (less than 40 CAD, as of 1 January 2000). His Kenyan colleagues received more than six times that amount (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 218). In Mombasa, his monthly salary was 4,000 KSh. "Here, you had no other option," he explains. "Even earning 50 shillings was difficult."

In opening stores, Somalis were establishing businesses similar to those of the Ethiopian community, who already had a number of shops, including video clubs, hardware stores and coffee shops – but these were not to the taste of Somalis (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 213). By the late 1990s, significant economic activity had built up. In 2000, Montclos and Kagwanja (p.215) wrote that if economic activity were taxed in the camp, it would yield more than two million Kenyan shillings annually. Businesses diversified over time. Now, there are butchers, second-hand clothing stores, mobile phone repair shops and cybercafés, among others. Generators were bought, bringing light and television to Kakuma. Somalis started with small-scale businesses whose size grew with time and profit. Changes came gradually. For a long time, bicycles were the only means of transport in the camp. In 2009, "one Somali came with the first motorcycle," recalls Dayib. "Others joined in. The year after, this person bought a taxi. Now, 40 taxis operate in the camp, all owned by the Somali community. Only a few people own them, because not everyone has that type of wealth." While I was not able to verify whether all taxis were owned by Somalis, this comment reflects the Somalis' feeling that they have played a crucial role in the camp's economic progress. Within a decade, the Somali market was booming and electricity, phones and transport were normal features. Since he arrived in Kakuma in 2003, Dayib says the camp has gone through a revolution:

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[74] As refugees in Kenya cannot be hired unless no Kenyan can fulfil the same duties, aid organizations offer them positions against an incentive, instead of a salary. The amounts paid are considerably lower than salaries paid for similar positions. I discuss incentive further in Chapter 4, section 2.1.1.

> Everything has changed, except for the provision of food and water. There was no business in the Somali area and no Somali market, only a few people had phones. People were desperate. The camp was mostly Sudanese then. Minors formed the majority. There were maybe a few thousand Somalis. The Ethiopian market was bigger than this one [the Somali one]. Ethiopians were getting loans from Don Bosco [a faith-based charity that provides technical training in support of livelihood activities in Kakuma] to start businesses, but Somalis don't take loans with interest for religious reasons, so the only real market was Ethiopian. Then the Sudanese started repatriating and more Somalis came. The Somali market is big now. People are doing business, but it doesn't mean that everyone is rich. It is people who went abroad who sent money that was invested into businesses. Money had to come from abroad because in this camp, you can't get capital.

Even though Somalis had opened businesses previously, most say that major changes got underway in 2006 when many of their compatriots were resettled to the U.S. and began sending money back to the camp. (The impact of resettlement on the camp is discussed in Chapter 6.) At the same time, new refugees started arriving from Somalia, some with enough money to establish businesses. Today, the main Somali market, in Kakuma I, is packed with shops, restaurants and teahouses.

There were prosperous dealers long before 2006, but it was the Ethiopian market that was really thriving. Interestingly, 2006 is also seen as the point when trade began to decline for non-Somali business owners, as they were losing customers with the southern Sudanese going home. This highlights the interconnection of the camp economy with events beyond its borders. Furthermore, the widely scattered Somali diaspora[75] played an important role in the development of Somali businesses, and camp residents remarked that the 2012 relocation directive was affecting the economy. Refugees now returning to the camp from Nairobi had previously been transferring money to Kakuma to support their relatives. Their spending was benefiting Somali businesses in the camp. Once they were back in Kakuma, they were no longer sending money, which meant less money was circulating in the camp.

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[75] The Somali diaspora beyond neighbouring countries is important but precise figures are not available, as this information is not necessarily compiled in a similar manner by all countries. Key settlement countries include the U.S., the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, South Africa and the Gulf States (Moret et

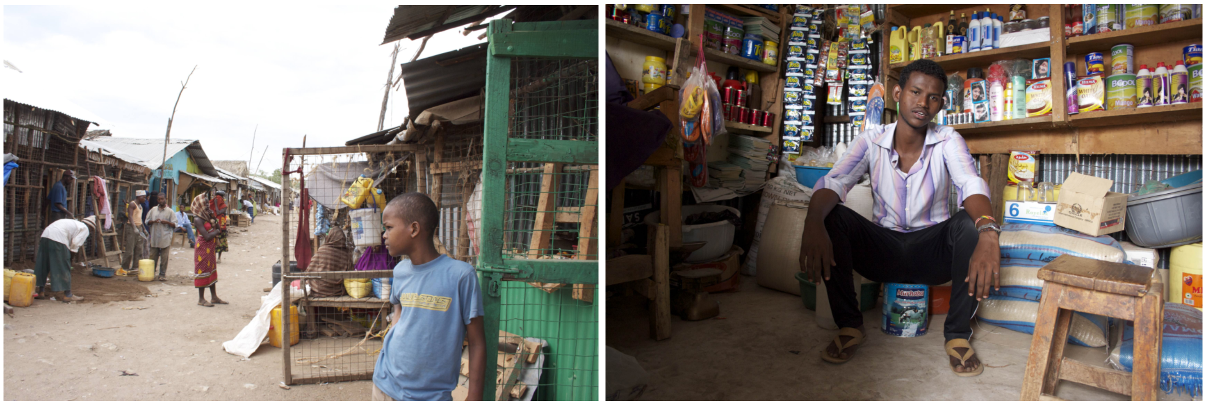

Figure 10: A part of the Somali market and a Somali shop. Author's photographs.

2.2.2 Somalis call the world – and call home

In Kakuma in the late 1990s, there were no televisions and no phone network, which contributed to the feeling that the camp was "another planet." "We didn't know what was happening in Nairobi," recounts Abdikadir. "Someone had to come from there and tell you what was happening. At night, you might hear KBC [Kenya Broadcasting Corporation]. Sometimes you would get the BBC Somali services and Arabic BBC. That was the only way to get news. TV was not there. Star FM [the Somali-language radio station] only came recently. Later on, people brought Arabic [satellite] dishes so we would go to certain hotels to see the news. But that was just sometimes."

In the absence of cell phone communications, there were radio communication transmitters (*taar*) that could be used to contact Somalia, Nairobi and Dadaab, to pass on information or

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al. 2006: 15). More than 100,000 live in the U.S. (Yamamoto 2011). The U.K. is home to an estimated 90,000 Somalis (Sheikh and Healy 2009: 9). Up to 100,000 Somalis are said to live in Toronto, Canada (Hammond 2007: 131). Another 100,000 are estimated to live in the Gulf States (Sheikh and Healy 2009: 8).

wire money.[76] "You could call America, but it meant being put through to Nairobi, then Nairobi would call America by phone and put the phone on the radio. The communication was bad and expensive," explains Dayib. Some used the mail, as it was cheaper (but also much slower). It was not until 2004 that the cell phone network started covering parts of Kakuma (KANEBU 2004: 7). Initially, calls could only be made from a few spots in the camp. Then the coverage expanded. With the network came new business opportunities: phone repair and sales shops, phone charging and the sale of phone credit.

Cell phones helped to connect Kakuma to the world and, as Xaawo, 21, points out, facilitated communications "with those in Canada and the U.S. who can help by sending small amounts of money." The Internet soon followed. Internet cafés opened in the camp before NGO offices even had proper Internet connections; NGO staff would go to the camp to use the Internet. When M-Pesa, a popular Kenyan money transfer system operated through cell phones, was launched in the late 2000s, it could be used in the camp. Today, nearly everyone has a cell phone, which often gives access to the Internet, and many households have a television, thanks to the generators providing electricity. Somalis hold their oral culture in high esteem and claim that they were one of the driving forces in the development of telecommunications in the camp. Such global connectedness was key to "civilizing" the camp, as they see it.

Wealth on a small scale gradually accumulated, again altering the geography of the camp. Indeed, not all parts are equally developed. As I mentioned before, Kakuma I is not only more crowded, it is also visibly richer, with bigger markets than other sections of the camp. More people have electricity and houses are larger, with living room sets and linoleum on the floor. A number of refugees explain the prosperity of the Somali neighbourhood in Kakuma I by the fact that many of its first residents were of the Darod clan family who had a better social network, with relatives abroad, and they benefited from remittances that helped them start businesses. Somalis say that when the Somali Bantu started leaving in the early 2000s the same phenomenon did not occur; money did not flow back to the camp. At a later stage, when new refugees, mostly from the Hawiye clan, arrived in Kakuma, they came with money and were also able to open shops. But as a Somali man explains, "they could not compete with the

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[76] In *Transnational Nomads*, Horst (2006: 141) quotes a Somali living in Nairobi relating that Somali refugees brought the first radio sets to Kenya in 1994. They have been used to stay in touch and send small sums of money, but also to trace relatives (p.138).

Darod who control all the banks in Kakuma, all [located] in Kakuma I. That is the only place where you can receive money. And Hawiye are scattered in the camp: they had to settle wherever space was available."

As Dayib remarked when talking about the wealth of taxi owners, disparities in the distribution of wealth are part of camp life. They illustrate once again that not all refugees rely strictly on UNHCR's assistance, which would make them virtually equal in terms of wealth. A Somali woman summarized the socio-economic landscape as follows: "There are three categories of people in the camp: those who don't eat three times a day, those who have improved their living standards and those who have good lives." Thus, the camp is a small society with income divisions.

Money circulating in the community shows that humanitarian assistance is not everything. This gives refugees a certain latitude and autonomy, particularly at the community level, although aid remains an important resource. For example, Somalis deem the health services offered in the camp inadequate. When someone is severely ill, money is raised in the community (as well as abroad, an aspect I will develop in Chapter 6) to pay for better health care outside of the camp.

Conclusion: Forever visitors

Regardless of how accurate this account of "civilized" Somalis overcoming the barbarians and ending up in control of most of the camp economy may be, it is a central one in their folklore. Somalis fought their war, which bound the community together and gave them a shared experience of surviving extreme harshness and isolation. Having been there in the old days confers experience-based authority over newcomers. The "civilizing process" encompassed the development of businesses and communications, as Somalis pride themselves on being entrepreneurs who dislike working for others and can thrive in any environment, as well as valuing their orality. The existence of an important Ethiopian market is often neglected in their accounts, possibly because it is an element that does not fit the broader narrative of the foundational story. The growth of the Somali presence, which led to changes in the camp's dynamics and landscape, also contributes to the impression of having tamed Kakuma. A remarkable feature of these stories is their consistency. While everyone's experience is necessarily unique, the same elements are usually mentioned. Others are undoubtedly left out. This suggests that the account has been built collectively through the sharing of memories and stories, and does have a uniting effect (see Halbwachs 1925 [2002]: 206). To employ Bloch's (1995) explanations, narratives in this case combine autobiographical and semantic memory, as they include recollections of meaningful events belonging to one's past as well as facts that have been learned, but not directly experienced.

If we consider Kepe's (1999) characteristics and McMillan and George's (1986) definition of "sense of community," Somalis who have been in Kakuma since the late 1990s have come to form a community. To some extent at least, most feel they are part of the Somali community, rather than strictly belonging to a particular clan, and interact accordingly. Being part of the community means that one's needs are taken into account, notably when it comes to helping one another, and there is definitely a shared emotional connection, resulting from a shared history and common experience. The initial experience of violence has precipitated the community formation process by compelling people to unite in the face of adversity. I therefore contend, like Vigh (2006), that while violence can have a very disruptive and destructive effect, it can also instil solidarity. For Somalis, the formation of a collective narrative of their experience has solidified this cohesive foundation, which in turn has strengthened the unity of the narrative. In short, the shared experience of taming a difficult and alienating environment has instigated meaningful relationships and led to the formation of a collective narrative, which in turn has contributed to the development of a sense of community.

Although clan and internal tensions have not disappeared, there is a sense of belonging to a larger group of people, the Somalis, sharing a language and a culture and bound by their collective survival. It is worth asking how people, particularly youth born of parents who did not necessarily feel Somali because of their minority status, have developed such a rapport, a matter that I discuss further in Chapter 5 (section 2.1.2). While being in Kakuma has not given rise to a myth of return, it has fostered the growth of memory and the construction of a collective tale of survival.

The fact that Somalis managed to turn Kakuma into a liveable setting does not mean that they find it suitable. As an elderly woman who had arrived from Swale Nguru camp in 1997 sorrowfully remarked, “You, you can go anywhere because you have a passport. Us, we cannot move around. Some of us have not even been to Kakuma town. If you have no firewood, you cannot go out to fetch some. It is a prison. These shops, these cars, all those things, it is not real business. It is entertainment. If Kenyans decide that we have to leave, we will have to. If there is a conflict with the host community, we must bend. This is not our country. During the [2013 presidential] elections, some people from the host community came and said: ‘If you have to go home, I will take this house or that shop.’ Kenya is tired of us and wants us to go home. We are forever visitors.”

This is the setting in which Somali youth have grown up. This presentation of its growth and development sets the stage for the next chapter, where I explore the experience of coming of age in such a context.

Chapter 4 - Growing up in Kakuma: This is home

> I have been [in Kakuma I] since I was a baby. I have never been anywhere else. I went to Kakuma II for the first time for the journalism class a few months ago. I have been to Kakuma town: I went to school there for a while. I faced many problems here, but this was always my place, my home.
>
> Mahdi, 21 years old

In principle, a refugee camp is conceived of as an "ideal" temporary arrangement which, in an emergency situation, makes it possible to streamline efforts to feed, care for and protect a refugee population (Agier 2005 [2008]: 44; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 210). In practice, this translates into a setting where living conditions are so difficult that they affect people's physical, mental and social well-being (Agier 2005 [2008]; Harrell-Bond 1986, 2000; Hyndman 2000; Van Damme 1999; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005; UNHCR 2004). Many authors have underlined that conditions in camps are not only difficult, but violate refugees' rights.[77] In *Rights in Exile* (2005), Verdirame and Harrell-Bond give a comprehensive catalogue of human rights abuses faced by refugees living in camps in Kenya and Uganda. They document breaches to the right to work and to freedom of movement (p.151-52, 179-80, 220-23), insecurity (p.153), reduced legal recourse for refugees, arbitrary arrests and detentions (p.167-69, 182-93), and constraints on political activities and freedom of expression and association (p.198-200). They point out that the right to adequate living conditions, including food, clothing and housing, is also violated: "In order to gauge the standard of living of refugees, HCR has normally used as a yardstick the 'economic level' of the local population, which, since all societies are economically differentiated, has in practice meant equating refugees with the poorest segment of the host population. For refugees in Kenya and

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[77] E.g., Chatty (2010) on Palestinian refugees in the Middle East; Van Damme (1999) on refugees in Goma and Guinea; Abdi (2004), Hyndman (2000), Jacobsen (2005), Moret et al. (2006) on refugees in Kenya; Harrell-Bond (1986) on Ugandans in South Sudan; and Crisp (2003) on refugees in Africa.

Uganda, this situation – combined with the encampment policy and restrictions on their freedom to seek paid work or self-employment – meant that they were unable to achieve anything like an adequate standard of living" (p.226). Respect for the right to education, (understood as primary education, since that is the only portion made compulsory by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* [Art. 28]), is imperfect, as education is not considered a priority by humanitarian organizations in emergency situations (p.254-56). Access to high school is limited, and to university, exceptional. Verdirame and Harrell-Bond conclude that the camp is "as irreconcilable with economic, social, and cultural rights as it is with civil and political rights" (p.264) and that refugees' rights are more at risk in a camp than when living illegally outside a camp.

Such human rights abuses are not negligible, since they significantly circumscribe refugees' prospects. The interdiction against moving freely makes it impossible to resume a relatively normal life by legally integrating locally. Bans on engaging in agricultural activities, operating a lawful business outside of the camp or being gainfully employed have a similar effect. The reduced educational offer affects academic development, and thus occupational opportunities. Also, in the absence of a clearly defined legal status, refugees do not have the right of residence and cannot apply for citizenship in the country where they live. Finally, refugees' involvement in political activities is restricted because of the limitations placed on civil and political rights (Crisp 2003: 11-12). Even UNHCR (2004: 1) considers that camp life boils down to a "long-lasting and intractable state of limbo."

Hence, camps are unconducive to healthy child development. However, people's experience cannot be reduced to a list of human rights violations. Somalis who settled in Kakuma when they were children and have been refugees for as long as they can remember saw the camp as an ordinary setting for a long period of time. Many only formed the opinion that it was a difficult and unusual environment in which to grow up when they became older and started looking back at their childhood and exploring their options for the future.

In this chapter, I reflect on the experience of growing up in Kakuma. I argue that youth mostly start resenting limitations on education, freedom of movement or work when educational opportunities are exhausted and resettlement prospects remain unclear. The comparison with fellow refugees who have left often intensifies their discontentment, while changing family dynamics add a layer of stress. Having been educated in Kakuma, the young people tend to be more capable than their elders in navigating the humanitarian system and Kenya, and thus are often the ones expected to earn money for the family. At the same time, limited job openings make it difficult to become an independent adult, and many feel that once they have completed their education, they must find a life outside of Kakuma. I will first briefly consider the "normality" of the camp and its routine. I will then discuss young refugees' experience of education, both because going to school filled their days, and also because refugees often centre on education, as they see it as a means of transcending their condition. I will then look at what happens when education is over. I will conclude with observations on how camp life makes coming of age difficult. Although young people's socialization is an important part of their experience of growing up in the camp, I will not develop that theme here, as it is the subject of the following chapter.

1. An unlikely home

For most parents arriving in Kakuma, the setting initially felt terribly unfamiliar. "It filled me with fear," recalls Amina, who settled in Kakuma in 1998. "I had small children who could not escape if anything happened. But we had to survive. We had no time for feelings. I made myself strong. I took my two youngest children to the nursery school and the older ones to primary school. UNHCR gave us some material and we built our house. Life was very hard. It still is." Their children were also facing difficulties. They were sometimes hungry, they did not get along with the Sudanese children, the weather was unpleasant and they disliked the insecurity, but this was the only environment they had ever known, so there was not really any a better place to compare it to. It just felt normal. They had a small house, went to school every day, had friends and lived with their families. In most cases, this was the pattern. Although a refugee camp appears an unlikely home, it became one. To some extent, the camp was an ordinary city with schools, roads, a hospital and clinics, market areas, churches, football fields and distinct neighbourhoods. In fact, if the camp were considered a Kenyan city, with a population of 115,000 people, it would be in the top 25 urban areas of the country by size[78] (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2009). "But of course," write Montclos and Kagwanja (2000: 208), "it is urban dwellers and not statistics that make a city; Rousseau would have even mentioned 'citizens', a term that hardly corresponds to the tragic fate of refugees."

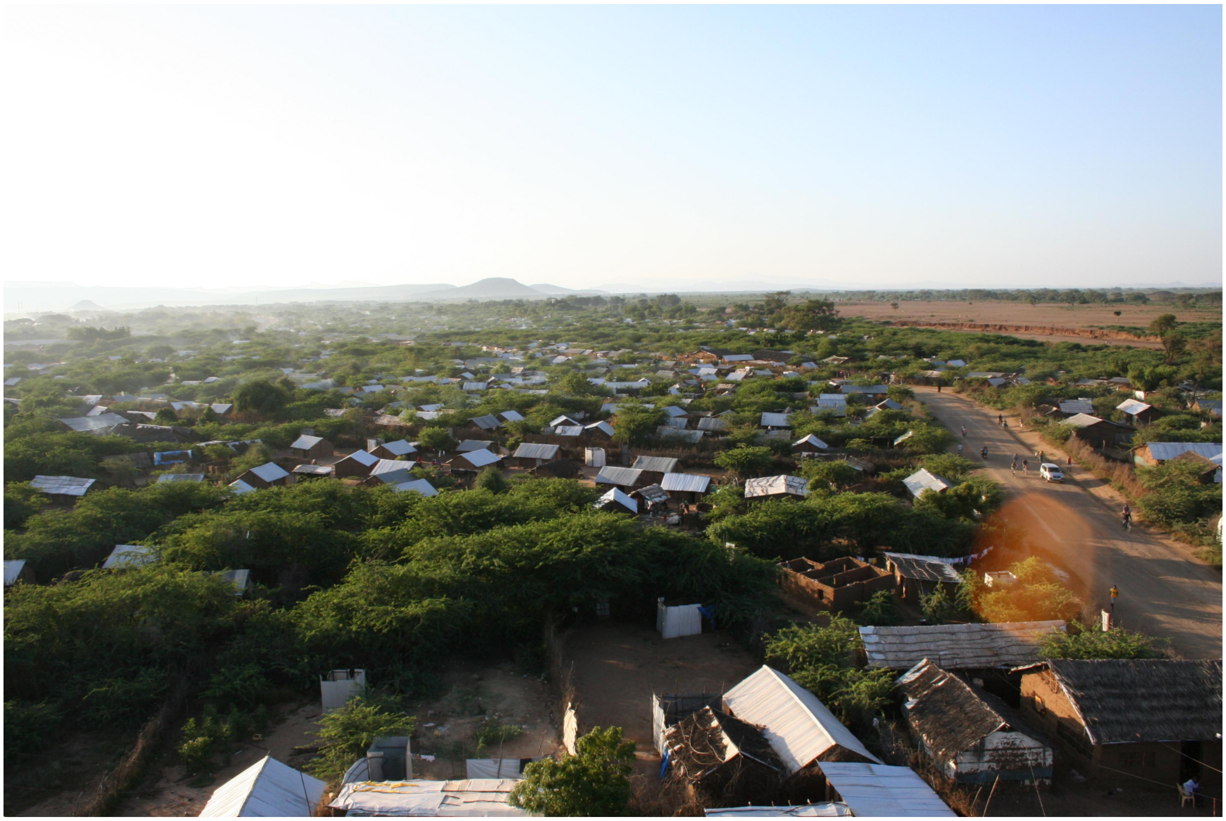

Figure 11: A part of Kakuma I from above. Author's photograph.

Unless they were the heads of their families, as long as they were in school, children were somewhat sheltered from the camp reality and its imposed routine by their parents. When the photography students illustrated a day in their lives, school and related activities, such as washing their uniforms, doing their homework and walking to and from school, figured prominently, as did fetching water and cooking. Even though they were no longer small children, education still gave a feel of normality to their lives and occupied most of their days.

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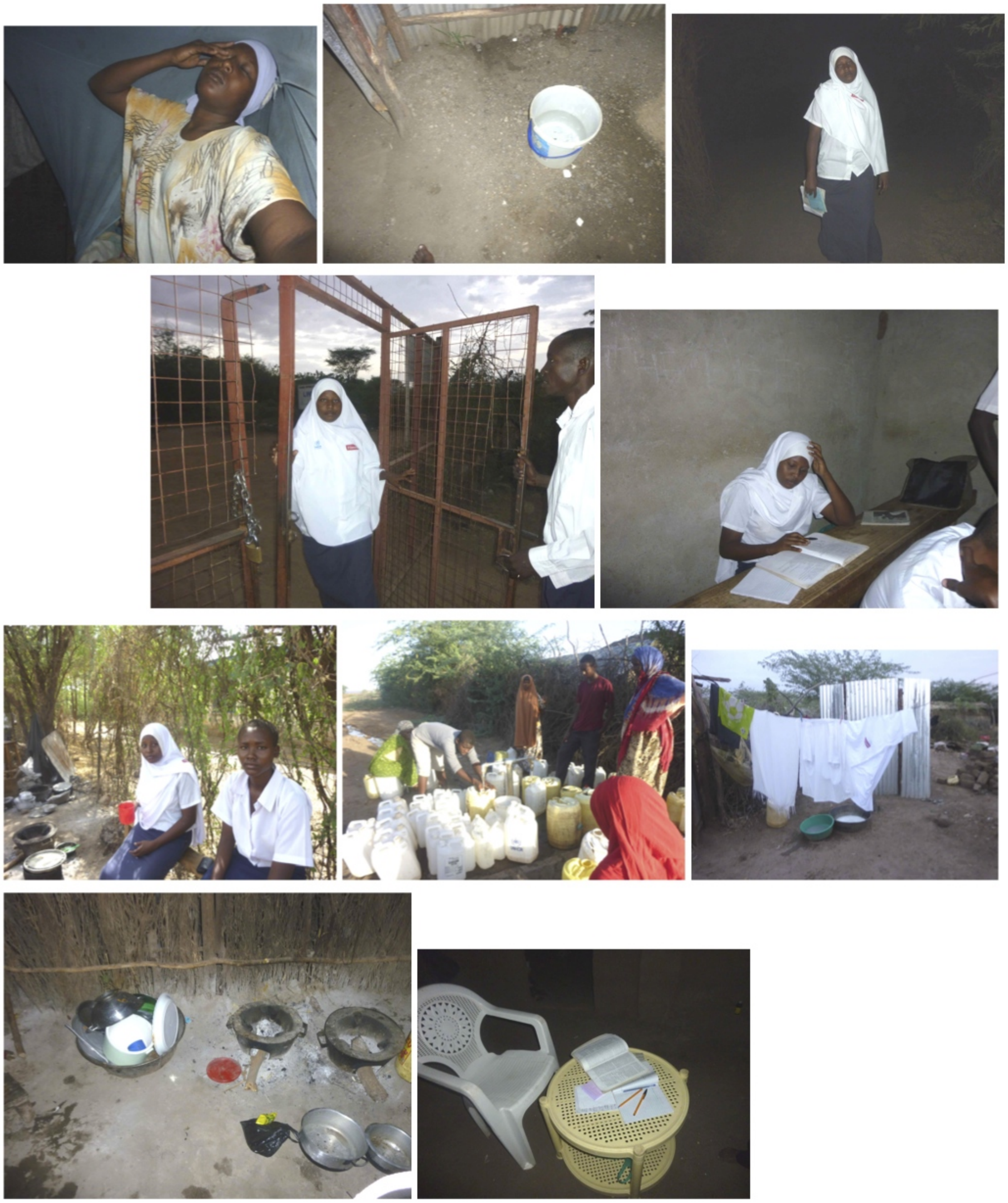
[78] Countries define "urban" in various ways. In some countries, the mere size or density of population defines a city. In other cases, definitions include economic characteristics, such as the proportion of the labour force that is not employed in agricultural activities, or the availability of specific infrastructure, such as water and sewage systems, paved streets or electric lighting (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2006: 7).



One day in my life

In my daily school experience, I do wake up early in the morning. I shower and get ready to go to school. I have porridge in school. After school, I fetch water, wash my uniform and help with the cooking. In the evening, I find myself very tired. I finish the remaining work and go to bed.

© Fatuma Hassan

Figure 12: One day in my life

Education was and is still a prime concern and focus in their lives, possibly because in the absence of family assets it is seen as one of the few ways of achieving a fulfilling life, as expressed by Abdi, 23:[79]

> I know people who left for South Africa. One of them told me that he now has a big business. He said he worked for nine months when he first arrived and he was well paid. With that money, he was able to establish his own business. . . . [He] was encouraging me to come: "Talk to your relatives, tell them there is work for you in South Africa." But I don't want to go. I want to learn. I don't want a job without education. One day, people can rob you. Your mobile, your computer, they can be taken away. But if you are a lawyer, a doctor, no one can take your knowledge away. So I want to learn first, materialize my ambitions. My friends say I am a dreamer and that my dreams are too far.

Young people often cite education and resettlement as the only two things that can be gained from being in Kakuma,[80] even though access to quality education for school-age children is anything but satisfactory.[81] The importance assigned to education is so great that a number of young people explain they are still in the camp because of their studies. Some have even come to the camp because they wanted to enrol in school and not necessarily because of insecurity at home. Of the young people I came to know who had grown up in the camp, some were still in primary or secondary school, but they were a minority. Most had either completed school or had dropped out. Some were working or looking for work, while others were seeking opportunities to study further. In this section, I first look at their primary and secondary school experience and then focus on the limited paths to further education.

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[79] This is not particular to Kakuma nor to refugees. Chatty (2010: 336-37) makes a similar observation with Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, and Finnström (2006: 204), with a non-refugee population: youth in Uganda.

[80] Compared with Somalia where, from the 1980s to the present, the richest quintile of 13-17-year-olds has on average studied less than six years and the poorest has been to school for less than one year, children have greater access to education in Kakuma, especially to primary school (Dryden-Peterson et al., 30 Sept. 2013).

[81] As education tends to be underfunded, educational facilities are insufficient to meet the needs of the population Those that exist are in poor condition, crowded and under-equipped. Teachers are also under-qualified (UNHCR et al. 2012: 7, 20), although for the last three years, 80 teachers a year have been doing a one-year diploma in primary education offered in the camp by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, in collaboration with LWF. LWF believes that this has led to improvements in the quality of teaching.

1.1 Learning in less than ideal conditions

Upon arrival in the camp, most children were enrolled in crowded schools where they followed the Kenyan curriculum. Somalis often describe their first years of schooling as a taxing socializing experience. They were a minority in a mainly Sudanese camp: “We had to go to school with [the Sudanese kids],” Khadra recounts. “They were always beating us. We were scared: they were tall.” Sometimes there was no shared language between students, nor between teachers and Somali students, as Abdikadir relates: “I went to school in Hong Kong [a neighbourhood in Kakuma I that was mostly inhabited by Sudanese] and could not understand the teachers. Most of them were Sudanese. They didn’t speak Swahili. They spoke English, but their English was very difficult for me.” To manage, many children went to private afternoon classes taught by high school graduates.

Parents who had the financial means to send their children to non-refugee schools outside the camp where the quality of education was deemed better did so. Abyan and Amran, 17 and 18, are sisters who were raised by their grandmother. They completed their secondary education in two of the top Kenyan national high schools. Amran explains: “When I was 7, I joined Gundeng primary school [in the camp]. It was not nice. We sat on the ground and the teachers were not good. In class 3, we went to a private school in town. We didn’t have a scholarship. All our family members contributed so we could go. We completed our primary school there. It is our relatives who paid so we could get a good education.”

The passage from primary to secondary school was (and still is) often difficult, as the secondary schools did not have the capacity to receive all the children graduating from primary school (UNHCR et al. 2012: 20).[82] Thus, only the top students would be offered a place, and those who were not admitted in a given year would not be accepted subsequently either. In theory, rejected candidates could enrol in a Kenyan school, but that entailed paying school fees, which was not always an option parents could afford. Moreover, while primary schools were usually not far from the children’s homes, there were only one or two secondary schools (depending on the period), which, for most, required walking a long distance at dawn. Awo, 21, is known throughout the Somali community as the outstanding Somali girl who got a university scholarship to Canada through the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). She describes her high school experience:

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[82] In 2012, for example, of the 869 children who graduated from primary school, less than half could enrol in secondary school (UNHCR et al. 2012: 8). The camp’s two secondary schools accept 200 students each, while approximately five percent of the students are granted a scholarship to a Kenyan secondary school by the Jesuit Refugee Services or Windle Trust.

> I went to Kakuma secondary school. That year, there was no scholarship to study outside the camp, so everyone had to go there. I was lucky to be admitted. Many students were not. That is when the UN was sending the Sudanese back and they were not allowed to enrol in school.[83] It gave us space and that is how we managed to get in.
>
> Studying there was hard. Sometimes, the river would flow and you had to wait until it went down before you could reach school. Otherwise, because the school was far, you had to wake up very early and be on the road by 5:30. It was dangerous. You would hear of people being raped and robbed on the way, but you had to handle it. Most of the time our father walked with us, but he is old, so sometimes he was tired or sick.
>
> My sister and I, and another lady and her sister were the only girls from this area going to secondary school. In our class, there were two Burundian ladies who dropped out. They said they feared being raped. Many of our community members, when their girls passed their KCPE [Kenya Certificate of Primary Education], they refused to let them study further. It was hard, but with a lot of commitment, I was able to make it. I think that children go to school if their parents support them. Our parents, they always told us to continue, that it was our future. Sometimes they would not buy food or other commodities to be able to buy books for us.
>
> I was always doing my best, but performance is hard here. In Form I and II [the first two years of secondary school], you must get a good foundation to perform later, but teachers are mostly the WUSC students who leave in the middle of the term. Once they leave, you have no teacher for weeks or months. So in the end, you can't cover the whole syllabus. It is only when you get to Form III and IV that you get Kenyan teachers. They put you under a lot of pressure because they say that you have to be ready for Form IV exams [the end of secondary school exams], but you didn't get a good foundation.
>
> Now, school is held until 4 p.m. But before, it was only until 1:40 p.m. In the afternoon, you did your own work. Most days, we stayed in until 6 p.m. and

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[83] From 2007 to 2009, UNHCR implemented a policy preventing Sudanese refugees from enrolling in school in the camp, to firmly encourage them to repatriate. Asylum seekers from Sudan were also deprived of food aid during their refugee status determination, a process than can last for years. The policy was rescinded after the person in charge of refugee protection in Kakuma when I was there, then based in Dadaab, protested that it amounted to forcing returns, rather than promoting them. Speaking of the episode, he levelled the criticism that it was "not the first time that something like that happens when UNHCR is promoting returns."

> organized our own classes. Sometimes we went to school on Sunday. If you were good in a subject, you taught others. Sometimes we asked teachers to help us. They would stay after hours, but we had to pay for their food and their transport. We each contributed 300 shillings per term.
>
> The dynamic between students was fine and being a girl was not an issue. In Form IV, we were 13 girls out of 85 students. I had been aware that I could get a scholarship since I was in primary school: many of our teachers would tell us to get good grades so we could leave the camp. In the end, I got a C+. Teachers were disappointed. I was the best student and only got a C+.

Awo is unusual in that she is a girl and a Somali, two under-represented groups in school, especially at the higher levels.[84] Teachers explain the relatively limited presence of Somalis by their lack of interest in more than basic education. While many girls go to primary school, only limited numbers continue to high school, as they are expected to help at home and marry young. For example, Mulki, now 21, was married at 14 without her consent and her husband refused to let her continue her studies. A number of parents refuse to send their daughters to mixed secondary schools, whereas most agree at the primary level. Security threats and inadequate facilities to accommodate girls' health needs, early pregnancy and lack of material support are also obstacles to education. Low enrolment, attendance and levels of retention, especially for girls, are common in most camps in the world (Dippo et al. 2012: 10-11, 19; Dryden-Peterson 2011: 6; UNHCR et al. 2012: 9, 15, 22-23, 25).[85]

In addition, like her other siblings, Awo never interrupted her studies, which is also uncommon: not many children go to school continuously in the camp. Some stop because of financial problems. For example, Axlam explains that her family could not afford to send all the children to school at the same time: "School is free in the camp, but you need books, a pen and an eraser. Each book is ten shillings. You need ten. Then you need a bag. That is 200 shillings. It makes 300 shillings in total. We were eight children in my family. It makes for a lot of money. So you have to sacrifice and rotate. When I was in school, others were not going to school but only to the *madrassa*. Now, I am helping them to go to school." Children also put their studies on hold when a parent is sick and needs help or when the family moves out of the camp temporarily. Nuradin interrupted his studies at the end of his primary education to look after his siblings and the family business, as his parents had health problems. He still hopes to go back to school:

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[84] For example, during the first term of 2013, Somalis made up 44.5 percent of the camp population, but only 31 percent of those enrolled in school. While they accounted for 36 percent of the children in pre-school, in primary school they were down to 31 percent and in secondary school to 11 percent. Even though South Sudanese constituted a third of the camp population, they made up nearly 60 percent of the students. Girls, regardless of their nationality, are less likely than boys to go to school. In pre-school and during the first three years of primary school, there is no significant gender gap. After that, there is a sharp decline in the number of girls. At the end of primary school, girls are down to approximately a third of the students. In secondary school, the proportion drops to one in four, although those statistics do no fully reflect the proportion of refugee girls going to high school, as a greater number of girls than boys get scholarships. Somali girls fare a little better than the overall population in secondary school, making up 37 percent of Somali students in 2013.

[85] For example, in 2012, only 68 percent of children aged between five and seventeen were enrolled in the various levels of education (pre-school, primary and secondary). More than 10,000 school-age children were either out of school or enrolled in schools outside of the camp.

> My father had lung cancer. He was taken to Nairobi and he died. Then my mother had breast cancer and was treated in Eldoret [a town nearly 500 km south of Kakuma] for six months. Even though I am not the oldest, she asked me to look after the kids and the shop. I was there for 12 hours in the day and managing the house at night. She is back, but she is still sick, so I help her. My siblings are in school. When I don't cook, I look after the shop. I can't go back to school. I have to fight to provide pasta and rice for the family.

In other cases, young people explain that they simply lost interest for a while. Hamra is 19 and in her fifth year of primary school: "I stopped for some years because I didn't have the morale to study, I didn't have enough food. Some of my colleagues were leaving for Europe and it was affecting my morale." This, combined with the fact that many children start late or have had to stop studying because of war or, once in the camp, are delayed by having to learn a new language, means that many of the pupils in primary and secondary school are well beyond the normal age in the Kenyan system. In primary school, where students should be between six and fourteen, 59 percent are over fourteen, according to the head of the education department of the international NGO in charge of education, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Secondary school students should normally be between 14 and 17, but in the camp, only 15 percent are in that age range, while 75 percent are between 18 and 28.

Many of those who interrupted their studies never went back to school, as Abdikadir recounts: "In 1998, when we started school, we were about 500 [Somalis]. Some of the kids said they could not learn in the camp. They gave excuses: 'It is hot, windy, there is insecurity.' Only 12 out of the 500 who started primary school went to secondary school. Out of those, seven finished. Some girls were married. Some went to Nairobi. Many were moving around, which meant that they kept missing class and ended up stopping." LWF's head of education estimates that around a third of the students who start their secondary education in Kakuma complete it, while the vast majority of those who study outside the camp with a scholarship[86] (and were often already top students in primary school) do so. As Abdikadir underlines, not all the missing students have dropped out, as some switch to schools outside the camp or leave Kakuma. Reasons given by Somalis to explain this low level of retention include a lack of financial support, the fact that many decided to work rather than study, family problems, the lack of opportunities after school, and the availability of humanitarian assistance that deters students from working hard. "At the end of the day, you know you will eat," remarks Abdulaziz, a 20-year-old Ethiopian. "You will have clothes and a shelter. Nothing makes you worry. Nothing makes you work extra hard."

Those who finished their secondary education consistently stress that their parents pushed them to do so. "My mother used to tell us every morning at 5, before we went to school: 'If your father and I die today, you will have your education to rely on,'" recalls Aziz, Awo's brother. Only a minority have parents who have studied (UNHCR 2012c). More have parents who regret not having been able to study for long enough.

1.2 After high school: Chasing higher education and training opportunities

For most of those finishing high school, that marks the end of their formal education, at least for as long as they are in Kakuma. Indeed, although higher education for refugees is deemed important for fostering leadership in protracted situations and for post-conflict reconstruction,[87] opportunities for post-secondary learning are very limited, which is true for most camps (Dryden-Peterson 2011: 52). A few individuals nonetheless manage to pursue higher education, either with a scholarship, though distance learning or, in exceptional cases, with the support of the community or relatives. Except for the latter group, only the top students can hope for such opportunities and, while they are registered in Kakuma, most of those securing scholarships studied outside the camp thanks to a secondary school scholarship or private funding.

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[86] Two organizations provide scholarships every year for a small number of students – mostly girls – based on performance or vulnerability. A little more than half of the Jesuit refugee service's 40 to 50 annual primary and secondary school scholarships are given to girls whose situation is deemed precarious. In 2012, of 24 performance-based scholarships, only three went to girls. Windle Trust sponsors the secondary education of 45 well-performing girls. But it is not necessarily refugees who studied in Kakuma who are selected, as half of the students chosen for their performance studied outside the camp (and are thus unlikely to represent half of the school goers). Not all parents are keen on such programmes: a number of Somali parents refuse to let their girls go away to boarding schools.

Some 30 students aged 18 to 25, out of approximately 130 applicants, are selected annually to go to Canadian universities through a WUSC programme administered by the NGO Windle Trust. Of the students leaving in 2013, only two, a boy and a girl, Awo, had completed their education in the camp. Awo was also the only Somali who made it, the majority being South Sudanese (23). There again, girls are in the minority. Out of the 30 students, seven were girls, despite affirmative action measures: to qualify, boys must have graduated from high school with a B, while girls need a C+. When funding is available from the DAFI programme (the German acronym for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), Windle Trust also awards a few scholarships to Kenyan universities. In 2012, 200 people applied for the two available scholarships.

The WUSC scholarship is often seen as the only way to get a decent higher education and thus, students who do not get the necessary grades to be eligible sometimes become incredibly distraught. Xaawo is one of them. She graduated with a D+ in 2011. As she was convinced her only hope was to get a scholarship, she managed to secure enough money to enrol in a school outside the camp so she could repeat her final exams. But she did not get a C+. When she received her results, she sent me a desperate text message saying she no longer had a future.

In 2010, the charity Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), in partnership with Jesuit Commons – Higher Education at the Margins and Regis University, in Colorado, started a pilot project, offering a distance learning university diploma in liberal studies, with a specialization in education or business. Professors are based in the United States and courses are given on-line.

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[87] For example, Afghan refugees who had had access to higher education repatriated earlier and took up work as civil servants or NGO managers, filling critical roles in the rebuilding of their society (Dryden Perterson 2011: 52).

Approximately 250 people have applied each year for the 35 available places. There as well, the administrator of the programme remarks that those who are selected "are often refugees from families with more money who studied outside Kakuma or refugees who completed their secondary education before coming to the camp." Again, although they are admitted with a slightly lower level, women are under-represented, as not many apply. They account for one student in five. While conditions are not ideal – the learning material is sometimes delayed, refugees do not have computers or proper access to the Internet at home – students are very enthusiastic about the programme and proud that their diploma will be from an American university, Regis. Warsame is one of the students: "It is fantastic and will allow me to choose my career. It gives me hope and it is better than being idle. Education is the only way to get somewhere." Although the administrator of the programme comments that students might not be able to fully apply their newly acquired knowledge in the camp, she feels it is worth it – in part because students gain skills that will be useful outside the camp, but also because students value their learning tremendously.

JRS also gives short programmes in business and community-based development, psychosocial case management and primary education. Courses target high school graduates, but students who prove their ability to follow without having completed secondary school are admitted. Up to 150 students are trained every year – many more apply. LWF, in collaboration with the Kenyan Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, has started offering a one-year diploma in primary education to its teachers. FilmAid trains a number of students in participatory video production and the NGO International Rescue Committee offers medical and laboratory training. In addition, technical training classes in carpentry, masonry, mechanics, plumbing, computers, electrical and metal work, tailoring and dressmaking, as well as secretarial courses, are offered by Don Bosco to up to a thousand students a year. In theory, students must be high school graduates, but in practice, they are admitted without a diploma, provided that their level of English is sufficient. In all of these courses, Somalis and women are under-represented.

There are thus a few options at the end of secondary school, but choices and places are limited. Many young people talk of their desire to study fields that are not offered in Kakuma: psychology, history, political science, sociology, medicine, engineering. The ambitions expressed often have little connection with what one can realistically do in the camp and, very likely, even outside of the camp. (This is an element I will touch on in Chapter 9, in discussing youth's view of their future. I will also explore it in the short "Note on life after the camp," as I came to realize that once they leave the camp, youth adjust their ambitions to their reality and the necessities of life.) However, sooner or later there comes a point when a student's education is finished. And while education is not necessarily an easy task, it seems that beyond that point things get darker.

2. When school is over: The tipping point

> When I was in Grade 6, my refugee classmates started going abroad. I wanted to go, I was wondering why I had to stay here. We were called for a [resettlement] process, but nothing happened. Now, all the students I learned with in primary school are gone. I have no friends here. I really want to go. I know I can't study here. I want to go to a good university.
>
> Amran, 18 years old

Amran, who had just finished high school, underlines two important elements here. First, the views of many on the camp changed with the large-scale resettlement of Somalis to North America that started in 2006. Leaving for the West became everyone's focus, and contacts with resettled refugees increased people's knowledge of global possibilities. Second, while the camp was imperfect before, it feels worse when education comes to an end. School was tough, but it kept people busy. When it is over, impatience sometimes becomes overpowering, as promising possibilities and resources are scarce. Without the right to work or move freely, and given the unlikeliness of naturalization, Kakuma cannot be a place where young people want to put down roots.

This is the moment when, in the words of a Somali elder, "youth start sitting idle, which might compel them to use drugs and nurture bad habits." Idleness, often coupled with drug abuse, insecurity and early pregnancy, are probably the words most commonly used to describe the young generation in the camp. A few initiatives are taken to keep them busy, mostly through short training sessions and support for sports and cultural activities, but youth and humanitarian workers say this is not enough. The UNHCR head of protection remarks:

> These are the people we worry the most about, but do so little for. We try increasing funding for education and livelihood, as the biggest enemy of youth is idle time, but prioritizing is an excruciating process. This year, we have 94 dollars per refugee. If the population increases, which is happening, the amount per person will decrease. Such an amount doesn't cover food, but shelter, education, livelihood, health, water and sanitation. Do you cut healthcare and provide more for youth? Life-saving activities will always come first. The youth programme is always at the bottom and underfunded. And when it comes to livelihood, donors want to support women. It is difficult to find money for youth.

A number of young people are indeed killing time, but, with or without support, many also find ways to keep themselves busy, between jobs, businesses and community activities. A small proportion, usually the educated ones, find a job with one of the humanitarian organizations. Others work in the market. While no one is entirely free to move as they wish, having to deal with significant obstacles and limitations, agency is at play. Not all youth follow the same path, nor do all of them navigate the camp the same way. The interaction between agency and social forces (Vigh 2006: 14) opens up various paths, which I explore in this section. I first discuss how youth use their time and earn money. I then look at what happens when young adults do not have to fend for themselves and can rely on aid.

2.1 Money matters

Having a proper career in the camp is close to impossible, as no one can be legally hired to fill a salaried position. Still, earning money is possible. Between eight and twelve percent of the working age population have an incentive job with one of the humanitarian organizations – more than 70 percent of them men, according to LWF's head of community services. Although he deems business occasions limited, Kakuma being far from any economic centre, this does not prevent significant numbers from working in the markets, operating small kiosks and businesses or collecting *matatu* (minibus) fares. Educated youth often teach private classes for primary school pupils. Then, of course, there are other ways of earning money that aid organizations condemn: brewing alcohol, selling drugs and prostitution.

In principle, someone can survive in Kakuma without an income (or remittances; see Chap. 6, 2.2.1) by relying only on humanitarian aid. However, this means being impoverished. Even those who work struggle to make ends meet. My Swahili teacher worked for an NGO for a monthly incentive of 4,000 KSh (less than 50 CAD). He reflected on why some took two jobs: "In the beginning, I thought it was selfish to do so, as it meant that someone else would not have a job. But I came to realize that surviving with 4,000 shillings is very difficult. I spend it in less than a week. I pay 1,500 for electricity, 500 for sugar, 400 for communications, 500 for deodorant – in a place like this, you cannot go without deodorant – and so on. It is very little, and I don't even have to look after a family. Everything in the camp costs more than in Nairobi, except flour."

Jansen (2011) argues that the lack of access to legal employment is not particular to refugee camps, as the informal sector is generally more important than the formal one in Africa. For example, in 2006, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme reported that in Kenya there were an estimated 5.5 million workers in the informal sector, compared with 1.7 in the formal sector (p.11). Unlike Kenyans, however, refugees *cannot* work in the formal sector. For those who achieve higher education, it is thus almost impossible to find a job commensurate with their qualifications.

2.1.1 The refugee elite: Incentive workers

> After you finish high school, you are the king in this camp. You can get any job. Here, UNHCR is what comes after your mom and dad. They will give you a job.
>
> Aziz, 23 years old

It is true that, given the small number of people graduating from high school, graduates have a clear advantage in finding a job as a so-called "incentive worker" with a humanitarian organization. A vast majority of the positions in these organizations – up to 90 percent, according to the independent refugee-run media outlet *Kanere* or *Kakuma News Reflector* (21

Aug. 2011) – are held by refugees, most often young ones who studied in Kenya or in Swahili- or English-speaking countries. The head of education of LWF cites this as an argument to motivate students to stay in school: “Students know that if they finish high school, they can get a teaching job with LWF or be hired as incentive workers by us or another organization. Most end up with a job in the camp, if they want one.” This is an optimistic perspective, considering the number of applicants with a high school diploma for each position posted. The Refugee Consortium of Kenya, for instance, received 300 applications for 15 protection monitor positions. Some 200 people applied for five advertised outreach positions with FilmAid. About 90 percent of the applicants were high school graduates, and a few even had university diplomas.

High school graduates are not equipped to fulfil specialized functions, but they constitute the core of the camp’s workforce. They are schoolteachers, caseworkers, translators, community monitors and so on. While efforts are being made to boost their competence – medical assistants take a six-month class, for example, and more and more teachers are completing diplomas offered by LWF or JRS – the average worker is inadequately trained. I knew a 19-year-old caseworker in the LWF Gender unit who dealt with victims and perpetrators of conjugal violence without any training. He had to collect testimonies, which entailed having the first contact with the victim, and then refer the cases to the appropriate service. Without an adequate education and tutoring, he was constantly struggling, trying to figure out how to handle sensitive situations – and, despite his good will, frequently committed errors. Refugees and aid workers deem the quality of education and health services in the camp extremely poor, a situation where the lack of properly trained personnel is an important factor. “How can teachers not be trained?” wondered a member of the Somali council of elders. “How can someone train for six months and then work as a nurse in the hospital? [Technically, refugees are working as medical assistants and not nurses, but they are often the only medical staff a patient sees.] Have you seen that anywhere else? Those who go to the hospital only do so because they have no money to pay for health care outside the camp.”

2.1.1.1 Incentives instead of salaries

In a number of instances, incentive workers have the same or similar duties as salaried workers, but do not receive a salary, only a small incentive, far below the pay of their Kenyan colleagues. For example, a refugee primary-school teacher is paid 5,850 KSh per month (less than 70 CAD), while a Kenyan teacher on a contract, doing exactly the same job, receives a salary that is nearly six times that. For secondary-school teachers, the difference is even greater. Thus, for the same workload and responsibilities, refugees receive a fraction of the salary paid to Kenyans. Aid organizations justify such policies by the fact that refugees are not legally allowed to work by the Government of Kenya, unless no national is qualified to fill the position.[88] They insist that refugees must be paid an amount that is lower than the lowest taxable income (thus not requiring a work permit) – which would be approximately 12,000 KSh a month (about 140 CAD; Michira, 14 Nov. 2011). However, the average incentive of 4,000 to 5,000 KSh does not even come near that threshold. Not only does such underpayment frustrate refugees, it also lessens their motivation and taints the relationships between refugees and non-refugees, as the two groups are not treated as equals.

Incentive scales are set by UNHCR and imposed on its implementing partners, which basically means all NGOs working in the camp. Only two organizations refused to follow suit: the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and the Kenyan Red Cross. The Red Cross pays the same stipend of 600 KSh a day (approx. 13,800 KSh a month or 160 CAD) to its volunteers, regardless of their refugee or non-refugee status. The head of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, which had just accepted funding from UNHCR for the first time and was therefore expected to follow the organization's rules, explained: "I have always offered 9,000 shillings to our mobilizers. UNHCR is refusing to approve our salary scale and wants those salaries to be reduced to 5,000 shillings. I said I would not go lower than 6,000 and that I would give them benefits. I am told a cleaner here earns up to 20,000 shillings. How can I pay a [high school] graduate 5,000? I don't think Kenya would prevent us from paying salaries to refugees: you can justify hiring them for their knowledge of the camp, of a given language and community."

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[88] Kenya's national Refugee Act of 2006 (art. 16 § 4) stipulates: "Every refugee and member of his family in Kenya shall, in respect of wage-earning employment, be subject to the same restrictions as are imposed on persons who are not citizens of Kenya." This article violates Kenya's obligation under the 1951 Refugee Convention, which states that refugees are entitled to the same right to work as nationals of their country of asylum after three years of residency (art. 17 § (2) a). Kenya has placed no reservation on the article. The Refugee Consortium of Kenya tried challenging the government on that basis, to no avail.

The UNHCR head of protection agreed that incentives were exploitative, but he justified them by noting that refugees' work is a community contribution and that people living in the camp are receiving assistance. When I objected that the amount of assistance did not nearly equal the difference between a salary and an incentive, and that teachers and medical staff are paid salaries in all countries and are not asked to do their work for a pittance, as a community contribution, he replied that UNHCR had no money to increase incentives. If they were raised, services would have to be cut. I remarked that the allocation of salaries could be revised, knowing that UNHCR national staff are paid several thousand dollars a month, a salary significantly exceeding the national average, and that a middle-level international staff member earns at least 7,000 USD a month in an environment considered difficult, such as Kakuma.[89] He responded that this was impossible, as the money came from different budget lines. He added that he had internally criticized the system – and the differences between incentives in Dadaab and Kakuma – without success.

The UNHCR head of protection happened to be remarkably committed to his work and he often fought decisions that he believed were unfair, such as the non-registration of southern Sudanese children in school at a time when UNHCR was promoting their repatriation. His acceptance of a system that he qualified as exploitative was disconcerting. He was not alone: in fact, the only NGO workers I met who openly questioned the rules were the representatives of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and the Red Cross. The head of an international NGO expressed a common opinion: "Incentives are not right. [Refugees] deserve better. Even if they are getting services in the camp, they need to get something additional. Unfortunately, this is something we found like that and we cannot change it. It is almost like it would have a domino effect and you would have to pull out." ("Pulling out" stands for having to leave the camp as an organization because refusing to follow suit would jeopardize funding from UNHCR.) I pointed out that the Red Cross was paying a greater amount to refugees and was told with a great deal of self-righteousness that they "were breaking the rules." So NGOs keep quiet and apply the rules, with some systematically opposing any increase of incentives, insisting that it would make their budgets too tight.[90]

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[89] For example, a single mid-level professional (P-3, step 3) based in Kakuma receives a gross salary of more than 72,000 USD and a hardship allowance of approximately 13,000 USD, or just over 7,000 USD a month. This is without considering the assignment grant and other advantages (International Civil Service Commission 2012 and 2013).

Refugees who dare to criticize incentives are harshly dealt with: in some cases they are arbitrarily dismissed (under the incentive system, refugees have no job security); in others, their credibility is attacked and undermined. The silencing of dissent is very effective. Even so, within the camp and far from their managers, refugees are vocal about the unfairness of the arrangement and emphasize that their Kenyan colleagues may earn more than ten times their pay for doing a similar job, without even spending much time in the camp. Many, such as Abdulaziz, have resigned themselves to the situation, as they cannot afford to lose their income: "I grew up finding [incentives] here. Whenever you ask, you are told that this is UNHCR policy. So you just keep quiet. You have to accept it because you cannot lose that 5,000 shillings. We realize that there is nothing you can do. There is nowhere you can go to complain and say that this is your right."

Nevertheless, being an incentive worker brings a significant advantage: access to national and international staff members of NGOs, UNHCR or the Department of Refugee Affairs and to resources, such as computers, food or drugs. Working for a humanitarian organization does, therefore, give social capital. This affects power dynamics, as young people are more likely to be the ones benefiting from such privileges, since they are the ones working.

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[90] Walkup (1997: 42-43), writing about humanitarian organizations, distinguishes four possible options for workers who must apply a rule with which they disagree: quit the organization; voice their frustration (which is often countered by suppressive action from the hierarchy and could eventually cost them their job); neglect (i.e., remain apathetic and do their jobs without asking questions); or manage to remain loyal to the organization, convincing oneself that working within the system is better than doing nothing. Individuals who choose the fourth option, according to Walkup, are those who get promotions. Questioning the inadequacy of incentives was usually unwelcome. I believe this is because most aid workers know the system is wrong, but have decided to work with it, rather than expressing their opposition. I could not help but think of how Arendt (1969) described bureaucracies as "an intricate system of bureaux in which no men, neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called the rule by Nobody. . . . In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant."

2.1.2 Shopping for the right job or creating your own

Given the low incentives (and the frequently patronizing attitude of supervisors), refugees often feel limited responsibility towards their job. Workers commonly stay home when it is raining, many turn up late and people keep changing jobs. Most young people who have been working for a few years have occupied several positions with different NGOs, which they justify by a better access to resources, a higher incentive or a smaller workload. Many first worked as teachers before they found slightly better paid positions or less demanding ones. Twenty-four-year-old Ibrahim is one of them: “I started teaching in primary school in 2010, immediately after completing my high school. I resigned this year, because it was hard. Children used to come from seven o’clock to twelve. Now we need to continue until four. The work became a burden. I looked for a simple job that would leave me time to rest. I now work with the youth group.” One of the journalism students, who was teaching geography in Kakuma secondary school, switched to an administrative job with the Jesuit Refugee Services. Her reason was that in her new position she could use a computer connected to the Internet.

Then there are refugees, such as Nuradin, who decide not to work for a humanitarian organization, finding the pay too meagre. “If you have a job here, going there everyday, jumping up and down, working under the sun, you get 4,600 shillings in a whole month. Imagine! Someone is working for you and you give him 4,600 shillings. What can you do with that? It is pocket money.” Somalis are blatantly under-represented in the work force and I doubt this is merely a matter of discrimination: many are unwilling to work for a small incentive, which gives them a bad reputation with humanitarian organizations. FilmAid was making efforts to convince them to join the organization, since Somali workers are essential to pass on information to their community. A few were part of the team, but their number was deemed insufficient. However, talks with elders and potential candidates yielded limited results. Idris, a Somali from Ethiopia working for an NGO, explains: “Somalis look at the incentive, then at their business options and decide to do business. There are people who are learned and could find a job, but the incentive is small, so they decide to do something else. If the incentive was greater, many Somalis would work.” Yasin is a good example of this: he could have easily secured a job – he is smart, has finished his secondary education, and speaks good English and Swahili – but he rightly assessed that starting his own tutoring business would be more profitable. His story is also a good illustration of the entrepreneurship that is so highly praised in the Somali community. He left Dadaab after hearing that business opportunities were better in Kakuma. Arriving in 2009, he started teaching English and mathematics to 13 pupils. He now has over 200 who each pay 100 KSh a month. He therefore collects more than 20,000 KSh a month (approx. 265 CAD): a respectable amount, compared to the average incentive.

As in school, girls are under-represented in the workplace. LWF's head of community services estimates that they make up less than 30 percent of the workforce and participants in activities. Girls who work explain that their communities fear they will be "spoiled," and that they are expected to stay home until they marry and then look after their new home and children (see next chapter).

Then there are a number of youth who do not manage to find a way to earn money, while others decide that they do not need to earn anything and rely on humanitarian assistance or support from their relatives abroad.

2.2 When you don't need to fend for yourself

> Drug is a big problem. It attacks the youth. You end up addicted. But the real problem is that people have nothing to do. Me, I was lucky. I got to work straight from school. I don't know how these guys do it. When I was in school, I hated Sundays. I would wake up late in the morning. I had nowhere to go, nothing to do. At least, school kept me busy. I don't know how I would do it without work.
>
> Abdulaziz, 20 years old

Some youth search desperately for a job, but fail. Others decide working is overly taxing. Faarax, a lively 21-year-old who has finished high school, had a job with one of the NGOs. One day, he did not show up for work. He asked one of his colleagues to tell his boss he was resigning. When I asked why he had done so, he explained that he wanted to enrol in a six-month laboratory course offered by the International Rescue Committee. He could not take the class while working, as he was expected to spend his whole day at work. He had not yet applied for the course and did not know if he would be selected, but he had had enough of his job, which he found too demanding in terms of time. He had decided that if he were not admitted, he would leave the camp and head to Nairobi, where he would try to find a decently paid job – which he did a few months later. Faarax was living in Kakuma with his mother and five younger siblings. He was the only one earning money, yet, when he no longer felt like working, he stopped. His colleague Abdullahi did the same thing because he deemed that travelling from Kakuma III to the NGO compound to work was not worth it. There was truth to this, as his travel costs nearly equalled his incentive. However, he did not look for another job closer to his home. This led one of the Somali zone leaders to judge: "In Somalia, there is little education, but more courage. Those who grew up here don't have any experience in fending for themselves. Those who went to school are educated, but don't know how to survive in the real world. They were born here, were always assisted with food, water, shelter."

Choosing not to work is not so uncommon. On the one hand, youth constantly draw attention to their boredom and poverty. On the other, they know they can afford to not work and rely on assistance. Responsibilities are few, especially for men, as women are expected to do the housework and look after the children. But this means dealing with idleness. On any given day, at any given time, there are gatherings of young people, usually men, playing board games or soccer, drinking tea or alcohol, chatting, chewing *khat*,[91] repeating complex choreographies or theatre plays. A *boda boda* (a motorcycle taxi) accident typically attracts dozens of spectators. Girls stay and help in the house, visit one another, meet up at the water tap. But not all those who are not working are idle, as some are involved in community groups that keep them busy and engaged.

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[91] *Khat* or *miraa*, a plant with a mildly euphoric effect that is commonly chewed by Somalis and usually seen by them as a fairly benign substance, is described by Somali youth as a detrimental way to kill time. "Lots of my friends go to the market and take *miraa*. They say they are avoiding stress. I say they are running from the truth. The truth is that life is tough. You are in Africa, you are a refugee," says Nuradin. Opinions on the effect of *khat* on health are polarized: some see it as mild and innocuous, others describe it as the cause of health and social harm. It is said to cause oral cancer, insomnia, cardiovascular problems and psychosis and to affect libido, but evidence is lacking (Beckerleg 2008: 753; Carrier 2012; Warfa et al. 2007: 316; Pennings et al. 2008: 205). It is not subject to international controls and is legal or tolerated in a number of countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen. It is illegal in other countries, such as Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. (Anderson and Carrier 2011: 3; Klein et al. 2009: 510). Maybe more immediately relevant in the camp context, *miraa* is associated with income diversion (Carrier 2012), as it is relatively expensive. In Kakuma, people often buy five dollars of *khat* for a group of four to five people, a considerable amount of money in the camp context. Moreover *khat* money leaves the camp economy, as *khat* is produced in the central region of Kenya, and not in Kakuma.

In this section, I have discussed the paths taken by youth in the camp once their education is finished. At that point, they increasingly start to feel and resent the limitations of their condition. Some choose to work or start businesses. Others are actively engaged with community organizations. Significant numbers, however, just kill time, waiting for something to happen. "Something" usually stands for resettlement, but sometimes also for leaving the camp by one's own means. In addition, the lack of resources complicates the transition to adulthood that is expected to happen when schooling is over, and this sometimes causes great despair.

Conclusion: Coming of age without resources

> There is a point where you hit the ceiling. When that period is gone, it is a downward trend. If you don't get that opportunity to do something, it is like you must go to sleep. There is not so much you can do. Say you don't get a job with an agency, you rot. That is the sad reality. But if someone can leave this place, go to another city or go back home, however small that is, they manage.
>
> FilmAid head of office

During my stay in Kakuma, I received several desperate calls and text messages from youth who suddenly found the camp unbearable. One of them was Xaawo. After she received her unsatisfactory school results and sent a distressed text message, I paid her a visit. She talked about how unfair it was that she was still in this camp after so many years, while all her friends had long since departed for the West. She was going nowhere, as her resettlement case had been rejected. She had no intention of going back to Somalia, a country she did not know. She no longer wanted to be in Kakuma. "What can I do here? Get married and have children? I just want to leave." But all doors seemed closed. She was so distraught that I initially worried that she would consider taking her own life, even though Somalis say that however distressed they may be, they do not commit suicide, as Islam forbids it. They claim that

Ethiopians are the ones killing themselves, out of despair, often after having been rejected for resettlement. While I do not think that suicides are common, I doubt they never happen.[92] In the ensuing weeks, Xaawo regained her composure and tried looking for ways to get enough money to enrol again in secondary school and take the exams yet another time.

Yasin, the young man who runs a successful private school, was also told he would not be resettled. He, too, expressed great discouragement and started calling repeatedly at all hours of the day and night, asking for help in looking for a job in Somalia. He said he could no longer stand the camp, he felt trapped, unable to go anywhere. He added that he could not "waste" his whole life in Kakuma and was looking for a way out. However, he did not know where to start, had never applied for a job and was at loss. A few weeks later, when he had somehow recovered his usual calm, he placidly said that if he was in Kakuma, it was God's plan. This is something I heard many times. Young people would vent their dissatisfaction with camp life and the endless wait for resettlement, but would conclude that it was God's will and should therefore not be questioned. In that respect, religious faith is a prime coping mechanism, although it can also be disempowering. (For a similar observation with Palestinian youth, see Chatty 2010: 336.)

The focus on leaving is common. Youth who are done with school spend a considerable amount of their time thinking and talking about possible ways out of the camp, sometimes desperately. While this is true for those working, those who are not working seem even more preoccupied with the matter. Even though youth describe Kakuma as home and say they will miss their friends when they depart, they constantly speak of settling in a place where they can live a "normal" life.

While the period of transition from childhood to adulthood might be nearly non-existent for girls who are married at a young age, for many young men it is a challenge. Socially becoming adult men in the camp, usually through marrying, moving to their own house, earning money and having children, is a difficult accomplishment. Faarax could not understand how some of his peers managed to marry at 20: “I cannot even support myself. How can I support my wife and children? You cannot marry before you are independent. And how do you become independent here?” This is something Warsame experienced. Not long after I met him, he told me he was about to get married. He was very pleased with the news and was already speaking of his future children. But things did not go the way he had planned: the mother of his wife-to-be asked for a dowry of three thousand American dollars. She felt it was necessary for the couple to move away and build their own home in the camp. “How can I find such money when I only earn 5,000 shillings a month?” he wondered [he was working for an NGO]. He tried convincing the mother of his future wife that they could both live in his family’s house for a while and gradually save money so that at some point they would be able to have their own place. The negotiations lasted for many weeks and ultimately failed, which left Warsame bitter, feeling that he could not afford to get married. While the community would normally come together to fund the wedding, such a large sum could not be gathered.

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[92] Suicide and suicidal thoughts are fairly common in a number of refugee populations in camps. For example, 37 percent of Cuban refugees detained in a camp before arriving in the U.S. reported having seen someone attempting or committing suicide (Lustig et al. 2004: 27); Sudanese children growing up in Ugandan camps had more suicidal thoughts than other Ugandan children (Paardekooper 1999: 533); a survey with Afghan refugee mothers, who happened to also be Muslims, in Pakistani camps showed high suicidal feelings among them (Rahman and Hafeez 2003: 392). A recent media article about suicides in Dadaab gives anecdotal evidence of Somalis taking their own lives (Bosire, 20 June 2013).

Yasin explained that he only managed to marry because of the decent income he made with his private school. “If you work for an agency, they pay so little, it cannot ensure your marriage. The relatives, they might only ask for a hundred dollars, but then, they will tell you to build a house, to organize a wedding party, to buy two or three goats, one sack of rice, maybe two litres of oil, one sack of sugar, vegetables. You also have to furnish your house with mattresses, sitting chairs, carpets. When the house is ready, then the girl can come. I paid almost 2,000 dollars.” Unions may also be delayed because of resettlement: getting married during the several-year process creates further delays, thus leading some to postpone marriage.

I am not claiming that this is peculiar to youth transitioning from childhood to adulthood in a refugee camp: similar experiences are shared by a number of youth in Africa, and by Somalis in the diaspora, who sometimes put off marriage because of their remittance obligations (Honwana and De Boeck 2005: 9; Horst 2006b: 11-12; Tefferi 2008: 24; Vigh 2006: 101). What is particular to the camp is the feeling of being trapped with limited means and the impression of having been forgotten, which seems to deepen the desperation. Bauman’s reflection on exile comes to mind: “To be in exile means to be out of place; also, needing to be rather elsewhere; also, not having that ‘elsewhere’ where one would rather be. Thus, exile is a place of compulsory confinement, but also an unreal place, a place that itself is out of place in the order of things. Anything may happen here, but nothing can be done here. . . . In exile, one is pressed to stop being in exile; either by moving elsewhere, or by dissolving into the place, not being anymore out of it.” (1998a: 321)

Chapter 5 – The Somali way: Ethnocultural diversity and cultural preservation

> I came to Kakuma in 2007. Kakuma is different from Somalia because it is a refugee camp and Somalia is home. It is also different in terms of living with other cultures. In Somalia, you don't live with Sudanese people. In Kakuma, you live together with cultures and religions you have never seen before. In Somalia, I lived with my tribe only, not with other tribes like Bantus or Ashraf. I had no friends from those communities because of the discrimination. Here, I befriended them.
>
> Mohamed, 20 years old

A walk through Kakuma typically includes crossing paths with women covered in black from head to toe, others in *khanga* wrap-arounds or elaborate dresses made of *kitenge* (a colourful printed waxed fabric), and still others wearing tight tank tops, Turkana wearing layers of beads around their necks, teenagers in skinny jeans, Somali men in sarongs, a few wearing *jellabiyas*. Conversations in Somali, Swahili, English, Turkana, Arabic and Amharic are overheard, while one sees mosques and churches of various denominations: Ethiopian Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian or Evangelical Christian, among others. Some shelters are visibly poor and run-down, with crumbling walls and no furniture. Others are relatively large, with fabrics covering their inside walls and equipped with Internet, electricity, velvet living room sets and TVs.

While social classes exist in most refugee camps (and human settlements), Kakuma is unusual in its cultural and religious diversity. Camps in Africa are generally set up close to the borders of the refugees' country of origin, in areas where newcomers and their hosts have already had regular contact and often share a common cultural background and close social relationships (Crisp and Jacobsen 1998: 29). The vast majority of refugees thus come from the same country. In contrast, refugees arriving in Kakuma were outsiders for their hosts, the Turkana, and also strangers to each other, coming from various national and ethnic groups. They were exposed to a greater cultural and religious diversity than most had encountered in their place of origin.

The camp could be seen as a social laboratory: within a five-years span, an isolated and sparsely populated territory receives people from southern Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the African Great Lakes, in addition to aid workers from several different ethnic groups all over Kenya, and from abroad. Refugees did not choose to live together, might not have a common language and initially perceive the camp as an environment marked by adversity and alterity. Sudanese view Somalis as enemies, Somalis see Turkana as barbarians, and the Sudanese raid the Ethiopian neighbourhood once in a while. Despite this, people must learn to coexist, at least minimally, as they share services and infrastructures.

Although “enforced proximity” (Tomlinson 1999: 181) may not foster a cosmopolitan disposition, one can ask whether a shared “refugeeness” might create a sense of common identity, a space of commonality, despite obvious cultural and religious differences. While the camp inhabitants may be from different countries, they are also all refugees, living in a bounded space, sharing services, receiving the same assistance and experiencing the same harsh conditions. Alternatively, might the exposure to others cause closure, as a way to protect their own culture? Considering that identity is fluid and open to relational influence rather than static (Augé 1987: 17-18; Meintel 2008: 312-13), will this interaction bring “gradual transformation from one mixture to a new mixture” (Appiah 2006)? In other words, will an interethnic environment lead to a reinvention of ethnic identity, defined as “un sentiment d'appartenance à un groupe auquel les ancêtres ‘véritables ou symboliques’ des individus appartenaient, un sentiment d'unicité, d'unité, de passé historique et d'avenir commun d'une communauté” (Meintel 1993: 11)?

In this chapter, I explore how people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds have learned to live together, and reflect on the extent to which camp life has led to the creation of a broader inter-ethnic community. I raise questions about adjustments that have taken place and how Somalis have sustained their cultural ways. I argue that a convivial culture (Gilroy 2006) has emerged, especially among youth who have been in Kakuma for a long time, but that social life is still structured by people’s ethnicity. I then consider the impact of coexistence on ethnocultural identity and the self-identification of young Somalis. I emphasize that their belongings are multiple, which has already been underlined in other migratory contexts (Meintel 2008: 312-13; Oriol 1985: 172-76). I then examine subtle changes that have occurred in the transmission of Somali culture and traditions and observe that the camp has to a certain extent become a space of resistance and transformation, in particular for young women who aspire to redefine their social role. In other words, I look at the way people coexist and then study changes elicited by this coexistence within a group, that of young Somalis. In the process, I show that notions developed in the literature on interethnic cohabitation in urban areas or on the ethnic identity of migrants, such as conviviality or the multiplicity of belongings, are also relevant to understanding the experience of refugees in camps.

1. Living together or side-by-side?

Young people recall that in the early days of the camp, coexistence was challenging. They assert that even though some separation remains, things have evolved considerably, going from fearing one another to generally dealing peacefully with each other in class, at work and in the streets. Thus, with time, tensions gradually eased off and cohabitation and interaction between ethnic groups became ordinary features of life, bringing to mind Gilroy's idea of conviviality or "just living together" (2006a: 7), developed in an urban postcolonial context: "Conviviality is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not – as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must – add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication. In these conditions, a degree of differentiation can be combined with a large measure of overlapping" (2006: 40). In such a context, cultural or ethnic differences become ordinary. This does not mean that conflict or racism are non-existent, but they can usually be managed as part of public life.

In this section, after briefly looking at the early days of the camp from the perspective of Somali youth, I explore adjustments and arrangements that have occurred over time and resulted in people finding ways of coexisting peacefully. I then consider the limits of integration, paying particular attention to cross-cultural and religious marital unions. Indeed, although people interact harmoniously, social life remains primarily based on the ethnic group, partly for language reasons, but also for cultural ones.

1.1- From "enforced proximity" to learning to live in peace

> When I joined Loma primary school [a private school in Kakuma town], there were people from everywhere. They would tell us: "Somalis are violent." I used to say that I knew nothing about Somalia, that I was born in Kenya and that I am not violent. Finally, we became friends, we understood how to live with one another.
>
> Abyan, 17 years old

In the 1990s, when the camp's first inhabitants settled in, relationships were tense between refugees and between refugees and their hosts. Several people lost their lives in inter-ethnic fighting. Schools are one of the prime spaces of mixed socialization for Somali youth, who commonly recall their first years of study as strained, since for the first time they were sharing their space with people of another religion who spoke a different language. Southern Sudanese assume that Somalis are related to their northern Sudanese enemies, and Somalis add to the bad feeling by refusing to shake or touch their hands, or buy meat from them, and washing the water taps after they have been used by Sudanese, arguing that the latter are *haram* or unclean (Crisp 1999: 30). From the outset, however, there are unavoidable communal spaces. Parents can decide not to send their children to school (most commonly their daughters, so they will not have to share their bench with a boy) – and still, most parents do send their children to school. Water taps, on the other hand, and the hospital, medical clinics and streets, are forced meeting points or "contact zones" (Wise 2007: 1). For anyone wishing to buy goods, the market is another and, for employed refugees, so are workspaces. Total separation is thus impossible.

Although discord is still part of daily life, the level of conflict has decreased. This can probably be attributed in part to efforts made by humanitarian organizations to promote peaceful coexistence, especially through efforts to raise awareness about cultural diversity, and also through sports that bring communities together on a playing field. Traditional conflict-resolution and reconciliation mechanisms are also established, so as to defuse tensions. More importantly, people, and especially youth, develop social and economic relationships through businesses, work, going to school together and, in some cases, friendships (and marriage). Otha (2005) describes the arrival of refugees from the perspective of their hosts, the Turkana, and notes that refugees started hiring Turkana for manual work, Turkana traded wood in the camp, refugees sold goods to both Turkana as well as fellow refugees. Some Turkana were also employed in the camp by aid organizations. The camp gradually became an important part of the local economy. With time, through collective experiences, particularly in school, children develop a space of commonality. They learn to speak Swahili and, regardless of their first language, commonly incorporate Swahili words and fillers such as *nini* and *halafu* ("I mean" and "then" or "afterwards," but both are used as filler words) into their mother tongue. They listen to the same Kenyan music, and wear the same beaded and plastic bracelets although they may have contrasting dress codes. What was initially perceived as terribly abnormal in terms of dress or cultural practices becomes ordinary. Differences still exist and are still noticed, but they are tolerated. In the end, plain exposure probably has a major influence on attitudes toward other groups.

Learning to live together is an achievement of which those who grew up in the camp are very proud, as they consider it a valuable gain from all those years spent in Kakuma. Several explained that one key feature distinguishing them from Somalis who grew up in their own country is their ability to engage with others, including Christians. Many also pride themselves on their knowledge of English, Swahili and sometimes Turkana or Arabic. They say that those who reject people on the basis of their cultural or religious differences are older people or newcomers to the camp. Several young people are involved with one of the two Somali youth groups that aim at promoting harmony between Somalis and with other national groups in the camp, the Union of Somali Youth (USY) and Aliform Somali Generation.[93] In particular, they offer English classes to a few hundred Somali women, as they believe that to coexist peacefully, people must be able to communicate and do business with one another. Warsame,

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[93] There is another group, the oldest one in the camp, the Somali Youth League, named after the nationalist organization that called for the unification of the Somali territories, played an important role in the Somali independence of 1960 and became the first political party of the Somali Republic (Abuhakema and Carmichael 2010: 451; Barnes 2007: 277-78). Although its executive committee still exists, it was no longer active when I was in Kakuma.

23, is the chairman of the USY. He explains that had he grown up in Somalia, he would be "very frustrated": "I would only talk to Somali people. I would not share with others. When you meet with Sudanese or Congolese, you learn different things. My mind is growing. If I had stayed there, it would be locked."

1.2 Coexisting, with limits: The perception of the "other"

Although young people are perfectly able to live side-by-side peacefully, there are clear limits to integration. While the population of the camp is culturally diverse, that does not mean neighbourhoods are equally mixed. When refugees first arrived in Kakuma, they were typically settled in ethnically defined areas. With time, more social mixing occurred: people wanted to be in Kakuma I so as to be close to services, which meant they had to agree to move to neighbourhoods where other ethnic groups were living. In addition, while UNHCR initially settled people according to ethnic group, it later changed its approach, hoping that sending newcomers to various neighbourhoods would encourage peaceful coexistence and integration. Still, most neighbourhoods remain populated largely by single ethnic groups. Neighbourhoods could – and still can – be distinguished from one another fairly easily, mainly because physical boundaries in the form of gates and fences are set up between them and building styles differ. A decorated mud Dinka home with a its low metal roof might share very little with a Somali shelter, which often combines a small mud house with additional rooms built out of metal sheets.

Moreover, violence between communities still periodically costs lives. In the words of the UNHCR peace-building officer, "basic mistrust" between the camp's two most important groups, the Somalis and the Sudanese, or between ethnic groups of the same nationality remains the norm. Spaces of involuntary coexistence, such as schools and water taps, are still prone to conflict. Preconceptions and mistrust still foster tensions. For example, Somalis will not drink the milk of Turkana animals: they believe it is unclean because the Turkana keep all their animals together, including dogs – an animal Somalis and many other Muslims consider unclean. Derogatory words are often used to describe other national groups – a light-skinned Ethiopian said he had seen me walking with a "gorilla," referring to a darker Rwandese. A South Sudanese block leader claimed that, unlike Ethiopians, Somali merchants raised their prices when the customers were not Somalis, and that Somalis were inclined to bribe the police. Another element that complicates interactions concerns what is perceived as acceptable or abusive behaviour. One morning, 24-year-old Ubax came to tell me she had been fired from the organization she was working for. She was told her attitude was wrong. She said she had been in conflict with her Kenyan manager, because she felt he was abusive. She related that one day, when she was replacing her veil, her hair had showed slightly. Her manager had chuckled, "Are you stripping?" She was terribly offended. These are comments I heard regularly, just as I saw Kenyan staff and non-Muslim refugees pulling on the veils of girls in a joking manner. The person concerned did not perceive it as a joke, but as a form of abuse. Such acts highlight the fact that differences in perceptions of abuse can get in the way of trust and peaceful coexistence. Another bone of contention: while everyone receives the same assistance, refugees regularly protest that other communities are given favourable treatment.

The recently developed camp constitution is an attempt to encourage the development of a broader sense of community among refugees and introduce a non-ethnic-based leadership to avoid the marginalization of small ethnic groups.[94] Until 2012 the camp leadership was organized along ethnic or geographic lines. Some 45 different communities each had their own leaders who fought for the interests of their respective ethnic groups. Refugees from smaller communities maintained that they were under-represented, which created tensions. "A Somali person living among the Ethiopians could not really seek for assistance anywhere, as assistance was managed by the communities, which would lead to discrimination," recalls one of the current leaders. In mid-2012, block elections were held and several thousand refugees voted. Many of the 91 elected leaders are young, which pleases the UNHCR administrators, who believe that they are likely to be more “open-minded” than older people.[95] One of the recently elected zone leaders (overseeing the 15 blocks of a zone), a 29-year-old South Sudanese Equatorian, asserts that the new structure, in trying to move out of the ethnic dimension, is forcing people to see themselves as a community of refugees who need to address problems together, rather than as separate ethnic groups fighting for scarce resources. However, her description of her zone makes it clear that ethnicity remains a central element: “In my zone, there are 15 blocks. Ten are Sudanese and five are Somali. For the Sudanese ones, seven are Equatorian and three are Dinka. The Constitution says we have to balance all nationalities. We try to have Somali Bantus on the board, rather than real Somalis.[96] We avoid real Somalis[97] because they will not work with you, but for their clan. Somalis will not team up with Dinka because Dinka are dictators. So as Equatorians, we are the majority.”

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[94] The will to foster a tension-free environment is central to the Constitution. It aims "to reduce the influence of clan, ethnicity and nationality based interest" and "to create and promote peace, stability and harmony amongst the members of the camp" (art. 2 § 3 and 6). Block leaders are expected to "promote harmony within and with neighbouring communities" and "ensure that there is peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups within the block" (art. 4.1.2 § 10 and 11). The Constitution establishes eight sectoral committees per block. One of them, dedicated to peace and security, is tasked with furthering peace awareness, harmony and peaceful coexistence, cohesion and healing, as well as helping with conflict resolution and raising awareness of the laws of Kenya (art. 4.1.3.5). So as to ensure that all groups are represented, the document states that any nationality with more than one hundred people in the camp must have a representative on the camp management committee. Thus if no one is elected, someone will be nominated (art. 4.3). Finally, the Constitution recognizes the role played by elders by stating that the various ethnic groups in the camp shall have councils of elders mandated to "arbitrate on civil issues of specific communities," "act as custodians of the culture of the specific community" and "play advisory role in the camp on matters of peace and security" (art. 14 § 1, 2, 3).

In fact, beyond sites of “imposed coexistence,” social activities most commonly remain mono-ethnic and so do many community spaces. For example, awareness-raising activities on HIV/AIDS or gender-based violence usually target one specific ethnic group. The library in the compound of the Somali administration may be open to all, but only Somalis occupy the space. Soccer teams tend to bring together players of a single nationality or ethnicity and Somalis and Sudanese have separate playing fields. The reasons for this are not strictly related to discrimination among the various ethnic groups. While “veteran” refugee youth speak English and Swahili, older refugees and more recent arrivals may not. Thus, unless activities are conducted in multiple languages, only groups with a shared language are likely to come together. There are exceptions: people of all horizons convene for events such as the youth festival and football tournaments, and a few restaurants in the Ethiopian neighbourhood are frequented by refugees of many ethnic backgrounds.

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[95] By stating that all leaders must have a good command of written and spoken English and preferably Swahili (art. 5), the Constitution introduces a bias in favour of refugees educated in Kenya, and hence young, or originating from Swahili-speaking countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[96] Somalis themselves commonly make a distinction between “real” Somalis and other Somalis. So-called “real” Somalis or ethnic Somalis are from majority clans, while minority groups such as the Bajuni, the Barawa and especially the Bantu are considered as non-ethnic Somalis.

[97] I discuss the camp leadership system further in Chapter 7, on the subject of trust and mistrust. Indeed, while many refugees believe the new system is a positive change, they are also of the opinion that their power is symbolic and mainly serves the interests of UNHCR.

1.2.1 Intercultural friendship

Warsame came to see me one day to share his excitement: he had been to a Protestant church on Sunday to attend the service, as an assignment in his intercultural communication class. He had discovered that men and women sit together in church and that women are allowed to go to church when they have their period, unlike in Islam. Given that he had lived in the camp since he was a child, was very curious and had been to school with several Christians, I found it disconcerting that he only made this “discovery” in his twenties. It meant he had not discussed these subjects with Christians until then. In fact, because of the limited socialization between people of various ethnic groups, even people who have spent most of their lives in Kakuma often have little knowledge of the cultural or religious practices of others.

While many report that they had Sudanese and Turkana friends as children, friendships between youth of different ethnic groups are relatively rare, although they are accepted, especially between people of the same religion. Interestingly, many of the Somalis who have developed closer relationships to people of other nationalities are from minority groups who claim they have suffered discrimination. Yusri, for example, explains that most of his friends are Sudanese and not Somalis, as many of the latter would not cultivate a friendship with him because he is a member of the Madiban minority group. Students in the photography class were interesting to observe. They would usually sit next to students of their nationality. Camera sharing between girls of different nationalities went smoothly; in contrast, the boys often said they had no way of communicating with a boy of another ethnicity. Girls had an easier time and seemed to empathize more with one another across ethnic lines, as a result of their shared condition and unfavourable social status as young women. Even so, they would not socialize outside of school.

1.2.2 The taboo against intercultural and inter-religious unions

One morning, there was a crisis at FilmAid. The office had been warned by its New York headquarters that a website was condemning a film produced by video students in Kakuma. It was about a Somali girl, Leila, falling in love with a Christian Sudanese boy. The film depicted their dramatic exclusion from their respective communities. The website administration was outraged by the suggestion that a Muslim women could fall for a Christian man and called for comments from viewers. The FilmAid team asked the Somalis in the office to help translating these. Some were violent; others lamented that Somali women were being “spoiled” all over the world and engaging with “black and white Christians”. Once the Somalis had finished translating, they started reflecting on the content of the film, showing their approval of the online comments. One said the film should never have been made, as inter-religious marriage is forbidden, and that the filmmaker should have been respectful of Somali culture. He noted that the bare arms of a Somali woman appeared in the film, which he equated to showing her naked. He went on to argue that being in the camp had damaged Somali culture. The FilmAid production manager responded that the film was not promoting inter-religious marriage, but presenting a situation that happens in real life and can cause distress, given the hostility of communities. In any case, the Somalis in the room deemed the film an insult.

Unlike friendship, dating or marrying someone from another ethnic group, and particularly a different religion, is taboo – even more so for girls. Nonetheless, inter-ethnic dating does happen and generates tensions and conflict between youth and the opprobrium of the community. Boys commonly speak about the necessity of protecting “their” girls. Girls relate how their brothers are watching them and reporting on them to their parents. Gossip about Somali girls spending time with boys from the Great Lakes is common. During my stay, there was a much-publicized incident in which three Burundian boys were badly beaten in the market by Somali boys for having visited Somali girls on Somali “territory.” The Burundians were later paid a significant compensation by the Somali community – figures given varied greatly, from 30,000 KSh to 65,000 KSh (approx. 350 CAD to 765 CAD). This was not unusual. A Somali leader recalled that in the previous year, Somalis had fought with Ethiopians and Sudanese for the same reason.

Cross-community marriage is always described as a very sensitive issue. Many Somalis concur that in theory, they can marry any other Muslim, regardless of origin, but they are quick to add that the community does not welcome this:

- Ayan: We allow mixed marriages if the man is a Muslim and we love each other.

- Deeqa: But people will say things that are not very good about you.
- Ayan: Somalis like marrying Somalis. They think you should not go outside of the community. It is not really allowed.

Young people recount several stories about Somali women who have been forced to leave the camp to escape the abuse and rejection of their community because they have married Sudanese men, or women who married Turkana and went to live with the host community, becoming outcasts. In fact, ostracism is the response not only to unions outside one's nationality: marrying outside one's clan or ethnic group is often equally taboo.

In sum, while day-to-day life has become relatively peaceful, tensions and mistrust remain part of the equation and intimate social interactions between youth of different ethnic groups are still restricted. It is more accurate to speak of living side-by-side rather than together, although adjustments are noticeable. The openness of youth to cultural and religious differences is obvious, even though this might not mean that their closest friends or future wives will be of another ethnicity. They proudly affirm that they are different from those who grew up in their countries of origin, citing their knowledge of other cultures and language and the hybridization of their identity (Ahluwalia: 2003: 141). Indeed, they have integrated certain cultural codes, such as ways of greeting, a love for Kenyan music, accessories of dress and the use of Swahili. These shared references between the young people of the camp result in mutual recognition. Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995: 218) write that "[d]espite the apparent commonality of their experience . . ., one seldom finds a sense of political solidarity among refugee populations" in camps, notably because of the competition for scare resources. Although this statement is not inaccurate, it calls for nuances. It is true that this competition does not encourage political solidarity among refugees. However, with time, a certain sense of solidarity around a shared "refugeeness" and space has emerged. Without it, even initiatives such as drafting a Constitution would have failed. Similarly, organizing community-based security requires solidarity among the camp's inhabitants.

Gilroy's concept of conviviality seems appropriate to describe the camp's social life. It would be inaccurate to qualify it as cosmopolitan, if this is defined as "openness to all forms of otherness" (Glick Schiller et al. 2011: 208), but tolerance has become the norm. For youth who grew up in Kakuma, we could, in most cases, speak of "openness to all forms of otherness," but also of a transformation of their own ethnic identity. This does not mean that differences are celebrated (Meintel and Mossière 2013: 2), but they tend to be accepted and often discussed with interest. While the other might not be deemed a suitable wife or husband, there is a curiosity about practices and customs, and a recognition of the other's humanity. In addition to facilitating peaceful coexistence, openness to others is likely to provoke changes within groups living in the camp, including Somalis who grew up there, given the fluid and dialogical nature of ethnic identity. This is the subject of the following section.

2. Preserving the Somali way

> If I go to Somalia and people see me walking like this, dressed like this, they will think I am not Somali, but a tourist, maybe American. In Somalia, they wear a sarong and a shirt. We wear jerseys, long trousers and shoes. We adapted the behaviour of people we live with. If you go there, the food is different, everything is different, the way people are and socialize. Here you socialize with Sudanese, there you socialize with your people. Still, I am Somali and will remain Somali wherever I go.[98]
>
> Nuradin, 22 years old

As Nuradin's remarks underline, young people who have spent their lives in Kakuma, always say that they are different from youth who have stayed in Somalia. Besides learning to interact with people of varied backgrounds, they have developed an identity that is rooted in Kenya, while maintaining a strong relationship with Somali culture. Several authors have concluded that the process of migrating and settling in a new environment can stimulate a renegotiation of traditions and social organization and thus, alter social reproduction (e.g., Boelaert et al. 1999: 168, 170; Essed et al. 2004: 3, 8; Grabska 2010: 481 and 2011: 88-90; Loizos 1981:

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[98] Interestingly, while Somali youth speak of the way they dress as different from those living in Somalia, in reality, they dress pretty much like young men in Somalia who, just like those in Kakuma, usually wear Western clothes to work and *macawis*, a sarong-like patterned and colourful garment, to relax at home. They have not adopted the trendy westernized style of their peers from Sudan and the Great Lakes who, with their skinny jeans, tight t-shirts, cool haircuts and skateboard loafers, would blend in perfectly with students in a big North American metropolis.

179). Preserving and transmitting a culture in a refugee camp entails some specific challenges. For one, the social landscape is radically different from that of the country of origin. Moreover, humanitarian aid creates a system in which refugees have limited economic independence, making it difficult to observe certain traditions, roles and social responsibilities, such as marriage (and the payment of a dowry) or the exercise of traditional justice (and its related material compensation) (Harrell-Bond 1986: 293).

In the following section, I examine the influence of coexistence and camp life on the ethnic identity of young Somalis. I consider elements that young people themselves see as testifying to cultural change or preservation, such as the transmission of language, the importance of tribalism and people's respect for the authority of elders.

2.1 Learning your language, your culture and your history

> In Somalia, you speak with your grandfather and he tells you the history of the country. He tells you about the warriors who fought for independence. Me, since I came here, no one has told me anything. I only learned from school that Somalia became independent in 1960. That is all I know. There, they know from the first to the last president. I only know Abdullahi Yussuf, Sheikh Sharif and the current president. And Siyad Barre.
>
> Nuradin, 22 years old

Speaking of their differences with people who grew up in Somalia, young people often mention that their grandparents were not there to teach them their history and Somali proverbs. They consider that their imperfect command of the subtleties of the Somali language and of all its proverbs is such that any native Somali would know they have grown up abroad, the art of speaking Somali (the language spoken by up to 95 percent of the population) being at the core of Somali identity and culture (Laitin 1977: 23, 42; Warsame 2001: 343).[99] Their parents share their view, as expressed by a member of the Somali council of elders: “Youth born in Kenya, if they go back to Somalia, they will just be like new refugees. They don’t know that country, they don’t have land. They know the religion, but not the cultural dances and the cultural dresses. In addition, even though they know the language, they don’t know the subtleties of it. In Somali, there are often five words to say one thing. Those born here only know one. They belong to this place.”

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[99] Laitin (1977: 42) remarks that Somalis "often consider speaking their language a sufficient condition for nationality." Long before the Somali language was written down in 1972, poetry was used as a "mass medium of communication and a repository of knowledge about the past" (Andrzejewski 2011: 9). Oral poets are among the most praised artists, in addition to being extremely influential. Their art has attracted the attention of numerous visitors, such as the scholars I. M. Lewis and Andrzejewski, and, in earlier times, the explorer Richard Burton (1856 [1987]: 81-82), who thought it strange that a language "which has no written character should so abound in poetry and eloquence. There are thousands of songs, some local, other general, upon all conceivable subjects, such as camel loading, drawing water and elephant hunting . . . The country teems with poets . . .: every man has

Listening to music, Faarax comments that while he easily understands the lyrics of Kenyan music in Swahili, when it comes to Somali music, he constantly has to ask his mother the meaning of the songs. Thus he prefers Kenyan music. A handful know the national anthem of Somalia, while all can sing the Kenyan anthem. A number say they are more comfortable in Swahili or English, than in Somali. Being unable to write Somali is the norm. They did not learn it in school and only a few have parents who are literate and thus were able to teach them. Only one said she wrote it without problems because she had learned the written language by reading newspapers in Somali. This was Abyan, the girl educated in one of the leading Kenyan high schools.

However, they stress that their religious practice is the same as that of native Somalis, which they see as a key marker of their Somaliness. Elders often emphasize that the transmission of religious values has been an essential task. “For Eid, we celebrate the way we used to in Somalia,” explains one. “The *madrassa* schools are the same and the children learn the same as we did back there. Religious leaders have made sure to teach the behaviours that should be followed, such as praying five times a day.” Young people have also adopted some customary practices such as the use of traditional healers. One day, Faarax had yellow fever and became extremely sick. He was not recovering well, despite repeated visits to the hospital and strong drugs. So he was sent to the healer. He showed me the curing burns on the outside of both of his wrists and his stomach and added that as soon as the burns were made, he was back on his feet. A few days later, when I was sitting with an elder, I noticed his wrists had old burn scars. I asked if he had had yellow fever. “Yes, and it was the only way to cure it in the bush.” Even out of the bush, Somalis continue to engage in fire-burning, a customary practice whereby a

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his recognized position in literature as accurately defined as though he had been reviewed in a century of magazines.”

stick from a particular tree or a metal object is heated and applied to the skin by a traditional doctor to cure illnesses (Kemp and Rasbridge 2004: 321). The adoption of such practices can be partly linked to youth's respect for their elders and their advice, a respect that they put forward as evidence of their unquestionable Somali identity.

2.1.2 Changing social dynamics: Remodelling the authority of elders

> I don't really know the culture of Somalia. I grew up in Kakuma. I know the culture of Kakuma. It is simple. We respect the elders. That is our culture.
>
> Yusri, 19 years old

Elders play a central role in mobilizing communities and clans, as they generally have a prominent position in Somali society: in addition to mediating conflicts, they are at the heart of cultural transmission and are expected to advise on community-related issues. Youth generally say they duly respect the authority of elders, as they would have in Somalia. The perspective of elders is often different. They feel the young generation is more liberal in its approach to them, dares to contradict them and speak up, as underlined by a Bajuni elder: "Young men in Somalia, they would greet and show respect to their elders. But those who grow up in the camp forget those things and behave differently. Changes are brought by the difficult life here. Parents get no time to advise their children."

Having been educated in English and Swahili, youth serve as translators for older members of their communities and have become key breadwinners, being able to work for humanitarian organizations. This, compounded with their greater access to humanitarian resources, may have brought changes to the social hierarchy. Speaking of young refugees in Tanzania, Essed et al. (2004: 11) assess: "[T]he suspension of traditional structures is not only a matter of deprivation. It may also facilitate positive change." Some become camp leaders, others work for aid organizations or start small businesses. "Young men have thus created new spaces for themselves, thereby adding new dimensions to their identities." While the authors are referring to men, the argument also applies to women (Kapteijns 2009: 119). Hart (2008: 7) remarks that such a reorganization does not necessarily result in a shift in power relations, but adds that attention should be paid to negotiations of power and status based on age and generation. In

Kakuma, although dynamics may have changed, youth still consider respecting elders a key element of being Somali. In addition, the recognition and support of elders is still needed to get married, just as the council of elders still solves conflicts within the community and with other communities. When my young interlocutors introduced me to elders, and sometimes helped with the translation, they were always extremely deferential. When no translation was needed, they often excused themselves, fearing to be impolite by attending the conversation, something they never considered with anyone else. One could say that youth have indeed gained power in the camp through their ability to communicate and find work, but it does not necessarily follow that elders have lost their social standing. In addition, while young people may work, being accepted into the social space of elders and assuming adult roles and responsibilities – notably by having a family – is complicated by the scarcity of resources. This may have helped preserve the standing attached to being an elder (Tefferi 2008: 26).

There is a subtle difference, however: while respect for elders in Somalia is often clan-related, youth in the camp commonly reject the clan system, and thus respect elders for their cultural knowledge and experience, but usually not as representatives of a given clan.

2.2 Clan matters: Becoming Somalis

> Aziz: I just know Kakuma. It feels like one nationality to me.
>
> Me: You think people make no differences between nationalities or clans in the camp?
>
> Aziz: Not when the Hawiye and the Darod line up together to receive the same ration.

Another element that characterizes Somali identity is the lineage in a given clan. Somali children typically learn the names of their paternal ancestors going back more than a dozen generations. “Despite its lack of any significant visible markers,” kinship at least partly defines one’s personal and social identity (Lewis 2004: 491). “The standard question posed to a stranger in order to decide how to place him and so react to him, is ‘whom are you (descended) from?’, segmentary genealogical distance being . . . a primary criterion in defining socio-political identity,” writes Lewis (1994: 83). Genealogy is at the centre of the clan, “a highly segmented group of agnates tracing descent from a common eponymous ancestor" (Lewis 1955 [1969]: 17). Starting from their common ancestor, clan-families are divided into clans, then into sub-clans or primary lineages that include four to eight generations. Within the segmentation of the latter are found *diya*-paying groups, which pay the "blood-wealth" involved in the settlement of disputes and all of whose members are collectively responsible for the group (Lewis 1955 [1969]: 17-18; 1994: 20). For example, if a member of the group kills someone outside of his group, all the members of his group will be held responsible for his action and will have to pay blood-compensation or face retaliation.

The nation's primary division is between traditional pastoralists, the *Samale* or proper Somalis, and agro-pastoralists, the *Sab*. In addition, there are smaller ethnic communities and occupational groups, or outcastes, often referred to as minority groups and seen as second-class citizens. The *Samale*, who include the majority of Somalis, are divided into four main groups or clan families, named after their respective founding ancestors: Dir, Isaq, Darod and Hawiye. Before urbanization, they were primarily nomads. The Dir and the Isaq mostly live in the north of the country. The Darod mainly occupy the far south of Somalia and the northeastern region of Kenya. The Hawiye live in the centre of Somalia, around Mogadishu, and in the Hiran region, as well as in northern Kenya. The *Sab* are a much smaller group, containing two major family-clans, the Digil and the Rahanweyn, who speak May, a language related to Somali. Unlike the *Samale*, they have a strong farming tradition. They mostly live in the fertile region between the Juba and Shabelle rivers, in southern Somalia.

The same area is also inhabited by the largest ethnic community or minority, the Somalised Bantu, descended from Bantu and Swahili-speaking groups and former slave populations (Lewis 1994: 20; 1965 [2002]: 5; 2004: 495). There are also Bajuni fishermen and sea-traders living in Kismayo and on the islands in the vicinity, and the Amarani, a community of merchants and sailors in Brava and Merca (Lewis 1955 [1969]: 51), also known as Barawa. Another sizeable minority group arrived as refugees in Kenya: the Benadiri.[100] In addition to ethnic communities, there are low-caste occupational groups or *boon* or *sab* (not the same as the *Sab* tribes) attached through patronage to noble tribes and known as "the people without brothers" (Lewis 1955 [1969]: 51): the Tumal (blacksmiths), the Yibir and the Midgan (or Madiban in Kakuma, both hunters and leather-workers). Customarily, a *sab* cannot marry a Somali and the child of a *sab* father and a Somali mother is killed at birth. However, restrictions are being relaxed, partly because of Islam and the *sharia*, which is opposed to caste distinctions, and partly through the influence of human rights (Lewis 1955 [1969]: 52-53; 2008: 8; Mohamed-Abdi 2000: 141). Minority groups mostly live in the central and southern regions, which were among the most affected by the war and the famine of the early 1990s. With the Darod, they fled in great numbers to the coast of Kenya, before being transferred to Kakuma in the late 1990s (Bradbury and Healy 2010: 10; HRW 1993; Montclos 1999).

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[100] The name Benadiri, used to broadly describe coastal minorities, was not common before the war, which is also the case for Barawa. Both terms, referring to areas (Greater Mogadishu and its southern region, in the case of Benadiri, and Brava, for Barawa) rather than ethnic communities, could originate from a reconstruction of identity primarily for resettlement purposes. Refugees coming from these two groups insisted they had been discriminated against for their "foreign status." Most, being artisans or traders in a pastoralist society, were indeed different, but did not belong to a specific clan, even though they were treated as such by aid organizations and resettlement countries (Lewis 2008: 8; Mohamed-Abdi 2000: 143, 145; Montclos 1999: 6-8).

Lewis' perspective on kinship as the basis of social divisions in Somalia has been criticized for being reductionist and traditionalist in the prominence it gives to (static) clans as a driver of social and political behaviour (e.g., Besteman [1996]; Samatar [1992]). Others see his work as an indispensable tool for understanding Somalia (e.g., Gundel and Dharbaxo [2006], Laitin [1977]). Clan does appear as an important aspect in people's own definition of their identity, and the fixed representation of clans in the political system seems to corroborate their continued importance (Menkhaus 2010: 89). For youth who grew up outside Somalia, however, the meaning of clan has been reshaped. Despite having learned their genealogy, young people are very critical of clan loyalty, which they describe as the trigger for the war and their parents' flight (Prunier 1997: 395-396).[101] They claim that once in Kakuma, they became Somalis and that clans and ethnic divisions came to be of secondary importance. From their perspective, they have stepped away from the "Hidden Religion" (Lewis 2004: 511). Traditionally discriminated Bantu and Madiban youth nonetheless maintain that segregation continues – which is hardly an issue raised by other minority groups – but still claim their Somaliness (cf. Bjork 2007: 136). The assertion that the community has triumphed over clan loyalties sometimes feels like wishful thinking, and youth are the first to bring this up, noting that older people remain mindful of clans, as are newcomers to the camp. It is not that they defend divisive clan dynamics, but these have deep roots in their history: “If people fight in Somalia, people argue here,” remarked a 43-year-old man. “If you go to a big Somali hotel in the camp, all they do is fight about politics, presenting the positions of their respective clans. Darod, Hawiye, Rahanweyn and Dir are always arguing.” Daud once related a conversation on tribalism he had just had with young men and elders: “We agreed that it is still here because of the elders. If I say to my children that tribalism is only used to identify, but not to discriminate, they will carry that message. But we tell our daughters: ‘I am Hawiye, don’t bring me a Darod man, we fought with them in Somalia.’ The elders are the ones who can transform the children and make them follow the right way, but we don’t.” However, some elders say they are educating their children differently. Somali lawyer Osman is one of them. He avoids teaching his children about clans and tribes, and only wants them to understand that “clans are our worst enemy.”

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[101] While the Somali conflict cannot and should not be reduced to a tribal feud, it is most commonly described as such by Somali youth who grew up in Kenyan camps (on the significance of clans in the conflict, see Besteman 1996).

A few youth make the point that the camp has actually reinforced the group identity of minorities through targeted resettlement programmes. Until 2006, group resettlement to a third country was ethnicity-based both in Kakuma and in the Mombasa camps. Specific groups, such as Somali Bantus, Madiban, Benadiri or Ashraf, were deemed more vulnerable[102] and given priority (Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 227; Montclos 1999, 2008).[103] Belonging to a minority group thus became a valuable asset and in some instances led to a reinvention of identities (Cassanelli 2001: 274-76; Menkhaus 2010a; Montclos 1999 and 2008). To a certain extent, this could explain why members of minority groups often insist more on their filiation than members of majority clans, but it could also be because they genuinely feel discrimination. “Most people here, they have not learned, they are ignorant. The only thing they know and think about is tribe, tribe, tribe,” laments Abyan, a Madiban. “Even those who came in 1997, when you walk by, they say this one is from this tribe. They label you, you are your tribe and not what you are. You are like a dog, you are nothing because you are from that tribe.” Another Madiban, 20-year-old Muno, adds: “People bother you because of your clan. No one except other Madiban come and visit us. Madiban live in a specific area, close to the Somali market. When people pass by, they pinch their nose, as if we stink. I cannot marry a Darod. They will say I am from a small clan.”

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[102] In the refugee regime, “vulnerable people” constitute a specific administrative category (in many recent documents, they are called “groups with specific needs,” although this wording is not commonly used in day-to-day management). People deemed vulnerable may receive extra assistance or be targeted for resettlement for protection reasons. Definitions vary slightly but usually include children up to 5 years old, pregnant/lactating women, the physically or mentally handicapped, chronically sick people, female heads of households, child heads of households, elder heads of households, single women, unaccompanied minors, and survivors of gender-based violence (UNHCR 2007c: 234 and 548). While UNHCR does not specifically define what “vulnerability” refers to in its Emergency Handbook (2007c), it stresses in several instances that special attention should be given to “vulnerable” refugees or to “groups with special needs” (e.g. pp.164, 230, 234, 291, etc.).

[103] Even though resettlement is in theory offered primarily to refugees with the most important protection needs, resettlement countries commonly select refugees according to their national interest. For example, Australia includes integration prospects among its selection criteria; the U.S. tends to favour groups of refugees that are supposedly united and “docile” (Agier 2005 [2008]: 95; Kagwanja and Juma 2008: 228-229).

I mentioned above that it is not only inter-ethnic marriages that are taboo. Inter-group marriages can be too. Fartuun explains that marrying between majority clans is usually fine, unlike unions between people from majority and minority groups. Saalim, 28, once showed me a picture of himself and a woman: “She was my girlfriend. We loved each other and wanted to get married. But her parents refused: I am Madiban and she is Majertin [from the Darod majority clan]. We had to listen to her parents.” Still, some – such as Hajiro who, unlike Fartuun and Saalim, is from a majority clan – claim that the authority of parents on the issue of marriage is diminishing, because their offspring are often the ones earning money to support the family. But something else emerged from her discourse: she pointed out that speaking of clan was hypocritical, that the things that truly matter are means and money, which, to some extent, are often connected to one’s clan: “Our culture, as much as we hide behind culture and tribe, is all about money. If my parents know that this guy is from a well-off family, he has money, a business or he is very educated, they won’t mind which tribe he is from. If he is poor and from another tribe, that is when the tribe will come up. Tribe is an excuse.” She still draws lines: marrying a Bantu is not an option: “When you marry a Bantu, you have kids with hard hair. Your parents will not want a grandson like that. But if he is Somali, it’s fine.”

The differences in views between youth and their parents when it comes to clan resonate with Hoodfar’s observations about Afghan refugees in Iran. She writes that young Afghans have forged a pan-Afghan identity, regardless of ethnicity or class, thanks to their collective suffering and their group label as refugees in Iran (2008: 183). Their parents, however, have not adopted such a view and still define themselves as members of their respective ethnic groups. This could broadly apply to Somalis in Kakuma, with a nuance: while clan affiliation remains central, parents say they must get away from it but find it a struggle to do so, given that clan affiliation has always structured their social life. To a lesser degree, this is even true for their children.

2.2.1 Social support and protection: A fluid arrangement

Changes in the importance of clan are also triggered by the sheer reality of numbers rather than the will of the community. Some clans have such a small presence in Kakuma that clan-based traditional arrangements have become non-viable and solidarity has come to rely on being part of a community. This includes group-based compensation, a key part of traditional justice mechanisms. Here is how Daud, a well-respected man in his late forties, explained the working of traditional justice:

> If someone hurts your face, you will be taken to a sheikh or the camp's *qadi*.[104] The *qadi* will see the bruises. If they are very fresh, he will tell you to come back when it is healed. The person who has hurt you will pay for the medical expenses. When you go back, there will be a discussion on compensation. For us, the face of a woman is more expensive than the one of a man. Me, if I am scratched here and there, I will still find a wife. But for a woman, all is in her face. If you damage that beauty, it is very expensive. You will have to pay four camels. Before, you had to marry her, but that was related to tribalism. Every tribe in Somalia used to stay on their own in one area. But here, we are different tribes. No one can force you to marry into another tribe, so instead you have to compensate in camels. We don't have camels, so we translate that into money. We say a camel is 5,000 shillings. In reality, a camel is worth 25,000 shillings, but we decided it would be 5,000, because of our refugee situation. You don't pay by yourself. You go to your elders and they help with collecting the amount.

As in Somalia, all members of the group are collectively responsible. However, a Somali elder who was a traditional lawyer in Somalia, and is well versed in customary law and the clan system, makes an important distinction: in most cases heard in Kakuma, unlike in Somalia, the payment of blood money is not the responsibility of the clan or tribe, but of the community. Neighbours, regardless of their clan, are asked to contribute. Small groups would not have the means to support their members, hence the need to turn it into a community responsibility.

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[104] A *qadi* is a judge ruling in accordance with *sharia* law, the canon law of Islam.

Instead of being solely based on clans and ethic groups, solidarity has therefore come to rely on being part of a community (although there is significant overlap, as members of a given clan or minority often live close to one another).[105] Solidarity is a crucial principle in Somali society,[106] and has remained so in Kakuma, possibly because it is central to managing as a community in exile. In this respect, Agier and Boucher-Saulnier's (2003: 316) assertion that by turning aid recipients into victims, humanitarian assistance might threaten the reciprocal rights and duties that structure social life, does not appear to fit the reality of Somalis in Kakuma.

In sum, young people not only define themselves by opposition to those who live in Somalia, but also by opposition to other camp inhabitants and Kenyans (cf. Chatty 2010a: 29). They recognize differences that distinguish them from other youth in the camp (Dorais 2004), which makes them assert that they are and will remain Somali by virtue of their culture and religion. (Afghan adolescents and their parents in Iran hold comparable views [Hoodfar 2008].) Moreover, young people often point out that they are also Kenyans, and apparently see no contradiction between being Somali and Kenyan. In fact, there is a noticeable tension in youth's relationship to Kenya; while they note that others keep reminding them that the soil on which they live is not theirs and that Kenyan aid workers can be unwelcoming, they nonetheless feel at home in Kakuma. They are more familiar with Kenya than with Somalia. They have spent most of their lives there and followed the national curriculum. They speak Swahili and English, like educated Kenyans. Yet, they are also Somalis. Their families come from Somalia, they speak the language, know the culture, are Muslims and understand the social codes. Of course, Kenya is already home to ethnic Somalis, so being a Somali in Kenya is not a contradiction. Most have therefore developed an identity "à référents multiples" (Meintel 2008: 312) and have integrated into their new environment, in contrast to most of their parents, who remain more separated from their fellow refugees of other origins and from Kenyans (Miller et al. 2008: 77). Malkki (1995: 3 and 140), studying Burundian refugees in a camp and in town in Tanzania, has proposed that those living in town inhabit "multiple, shifting identities" and have adopted a "rather lively cosmopolitanism." In contrast, those in the camp, insulated from the outside, developed a "categorically distinct, collective identity" as "Hutu refugees heroized as people in exile" and a strong mythico-historical discourse. This is very different from the reality of young Somalis in Kakuma who, in addition to being in constant interaction with the rest of Kenya, Somalia and Somalis across the world, as well as travelling outside of the camp fairly regularly, proudly nurture their Somaliness, yet treasure their capacity to interact with people of extremely varied horizons and adapt to a new environment. Meintel's observation (2008: 312) that the ethnic identifications of young people with an immigrant background living in Montreal "se cumulent, se superposent sans s'exclure les unes les autres" and vary contextually is equally applicable to Somalis in Kakuma. While parents may not display the same openness, they still see that of their children as a newly acquired strength, but worry about their "survival as a group" (Taboada-Leonetti 1989: 55).

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[105] This might not have been totally foreign to Somalis in Somalia: Besteman (1996: 125) underlines that in southern Somalia, "villages could function as diya-paying groups, even if villagers were members of different kinship-based diya groups."

[106] Rousseau et al. (1998: 404) consider that the prescription of giving, receiving and giving back "exists in paradigmatic form in Somali society, which imposes absolute rules of solidarity on family and age-group members."

3. The camp as a place of (limited) emancipation

While it is relatively easily for youth to name some changes related to their ethnic identity, there are other transformations they might not mention as openly. In the context of the camp, young women question certain traditional practices and gender-related social dynamics and roles. This provokes resistance and tensions not only between men and women but also between generations. As Malkki (1995) and Nyers (2006) have underlined, refugeeness can be understood as a site of political reinvention and reappropriation, "a site of struggle, a continual process of identity construction, and one that highlights how the activity and practices of refugees are recasting the terms of ethical and political discourse" (Nyers 2006: xv). In this section, I first discuss changes related to two specific traditional practices: excision and early marriage. I then consider more broadly the way young women renegotiate their place and their role in Somali society.

3.1 Questioning traditions: Excision and early marriage

One morning, I was accompanying the FilmAid team to a film screening in the Somali neighbourhood. A Somali woman declared to the driver that the organization was not welcome because it was teaching Christian values and blocked the car's path. She was referring to advocacy films against female genital mutilation (FGM) (or female circumcision, depending on one's perspective [Hyndman 1998: 254]).[107] Traditionally, nearly all Somali girls are excised before reaching puberty.[108] Girls are then married at a fairly young age, even though what is perceived as young is also a matter of definition and subject to change. In 1994, Lewis (p.33) found that while child marriage might have been common in the past, it was no longer prevalent, as girls were marrying between the ages of 15 and 20 by then. Lewis implies that by 15, girls are no longer children. According to Kenya's *Children Act*, however, a person is a child until 18 (art. 2) and early marriage, i.e., marriage or cohabitation with a child, is illegal (art. 14). The same article outlawed the excision of girls in 2001, while the excision of women over 18 was banned in 2011, with the adoption of *The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Bill*. Once in Kenya, Somali refugees are expected to abide by Kenyan law and, therefore, to alter customs deemed harmful. This has given rise to numerous behaviour change campaigns in the camp, in the form of signboards, films and group discussions.

But changes are not evident, as is apparent from Daud's comment: "In our religion, we believe that when a girl reaches 15, let her be married and have children. Otherwise, maybe she will become a prostitute, use *miraa* [*khat*] or alcohol." Thus, the Somali head teacher of Horseed primary school mentions that most girls are still being "cut," and often married long before they turn 18, especially in poor families, as the dowry constitutes a precious source of income. She is trying to convince young wives, and their husbands, to continue their education even after marriage and motherhood. Results are limited, but she keeps pushing. Prohibition and awareness-raising campaigns may have led to some unsought changes. "Because of legal awareness, marriages with very young girls are not happening in the camp and people keep them secret," notes the head of the Gender Unit of the Lutheran World Federation. "But we keep dealing with divorces involving young girls. They are expected to behave like wives and mothers, but they are still little girls. Their husbands complain that they go and play rather than prepare food. In addition, a number of them have problems with intercourse or suffer from incontinence because of their circumcision [or excision]. Men don't like incontinence problems. All these things lead to divorce."

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[107] While young women in the camp usually employ the term "cutting" to speak of excision and infibulation, humanitarian organizations systematically use the acronym FGM.

[108] In 2006, 98 percent of Somali women were excised and, in most cases, infibulated, according to the World Health Organization.

The community pressure to follow traditional practices is strong, but there is a manifest and growing gap between the community's expectations towards the girls and their desire to conform to those expectations. Young women argue that this gradually leads to changes. They point out that the more girls are marrying late and studying, the easier it becomes to follow their path, the community gradually adapting to it. They tend to talk more easily of their fear of being forced to marry at a young age than of excision, which remains a more taboo subject. They most often allude to "cutting" to explain health problems. In some cases, they claim that those excision-related complications are influencing parents. A 20-year-old who was bedridden every time she had her period, and had been told by a doctor she needed to undergo surgery, says her suffering has convinced her mother not to have her younger sisters excised.

It has also become more permissible for women to speak out. Amina has three daughters aged between 18 and 26. They are not married, have completed their secondary education and hold prestigious positions in the camp. She says she has paid dearly for vocally going against the current when her children were young. "I had different perspectives on education and wanted my daughters to be educated, unlike me. I didn't want them to be cut, because it gave me a lot of problems. I used to tell other people not to have their girls cut because of that. There was a neighbour's daughter who was about to be cut and I went to tell them it was not good. From that day, I was seen as an outcast. Fetching water was hard. People harassed me when I went to the tap. One day they attacked me. I was stoned and beaten. I had to go to the hospital and be stitched."

This assault happened over a decade ago. While being vocal may still not be encouraged, it has become less perilous and is thus more easily conceivable. Twenty-one-year-old Mulki describes to parents of girls how she has suffered from being married at 14, hoping that it will make them think twice before obliging their daughters to go through the same experience:

> I had just finished my primary school. I came home one day and I saw a man. I asked my mom: “Who is it?” She said: “This is your husband.” I tried to refuse and run away, but I had nowhere to go. They tried punishing me. I had to accept, even though I was not comfortable. I just cried day and night. I had my first son when I was 15. I had three by the time I was 17. There were problems with my husband. I had found a job in the health post and he didn’t want me to work, just as he didn’t want me to study. But I refused to stop working. So he took my children away. He escaped to Somalia with them in 2009. I don’t have any children anymore. I am missing something in my heart.

She says that some parents listen. Others accuse her of not respecting Somali traditions and of trying to influence their daughters. But the camp is an environment where women feel entitled to question and object to traditional practices, at least to some extent. More: it is also a place where these practices are prohibited by law, and young women know that and affirm it – although in practice, excision and early marriage still take place on the territory of the camp.

3.2 Renegotiating the role of Somali women

In fact, Mulki does not only speak of her marriage. She also denounces the outdated views that Somalis hold regarding women and their place in society. She remarks that “many women in the camp are deprived of their rights.” I encountered that sort of resistance fairly often from young women who had grown up in Kakuma, where they have been exposed to a human rights discourse. They spoke of how they had no intention of getting married anytime soon, they planned to study further, have a career and hold leading roles, no matter what their community thought about it.

A fascinating facet of the photography classes was seeing how young women of various ethnic groups showed a sense of solidarity with one another. One day, a Sudanese teenager mentioned that she was struggling to do her homework. Along with four other girls, she was expected to fetch water, cook and clean for nineteen boys at home, who, like her, were in Kakuma without their parents. It left her with very little time for schoolwork. “In our culture, men cannot cook. It is only women who do it. It is the same for cleaning. It is not like your culture where men help you.” All girls, regardless of their ethnicity, expressed compassion, but also indignation about the unfairness of the social position of women. Many commented that they knew it was not like everywhere, thanks to the media and regular contacts with people who were resettled and visitors.

Young women may be developing a more liberal discourse, but it clashes with the often more conservative views of young men and their community more generally. Girls talk of how boys enjoy more freedom than girls, who "are sometimes beaten if they are seen out in the evening." Unlike young men, who are generally encouraged to work, the reputation of a young woman who does so is damaged, a view that is confirmed and given approval by a youth leader: "The community thinks that girls who work are prostitutes. Most of the Somali girls in Kenya are being spoiled. You can see it for yourself here or in Nairobi. In Dadaab, it is better. Girls here mingle with Kenyans and other nationalities, like the Sudanese, the Congolese, the Ethiopians. You see girls with white men. That is why parents don't want their daughters to work. It is the same thing with secondary school. Very few parents send their daughters there, because they think they will be spoiled: they are studying with boys. Let them stay home and be safe." Women, and especially Somalis, are noticeably under-represented on the staffs of humanitarian organizations (and in high school), a fact managers explain by the burden of domestic work and restrictions imposed on them by their communities.

Mahdi and Nuradin once asked me how many children I wanted. I said maybe two. They told me I would be a bad Somali woman and that they wanted 20 each. I pointed out that that was a lot of children. They explained they only had to take more than one wife and that each of them could carry seven to ten children. I said I was under the impression that many women of their age were not thrilled by the idea of having so many children and sharing their husbands. "That is how it goes. It is Somali culture," they responded. Case closed. This dichotomy prompts the head of office of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya to comment that although women feel empowered and challenge their subordinate position, that has not significantly altered the discourse and the expectations of men: "They are the ones needing to accept to change. Take FGM, we all know it happens in the camp. Men from Somalia or Darfur find it difficult to marry an uncircumcised woman. There is a feeling that excision tames a woman. They all know who is excised and who is not." But even there, some change seems to be occurring. One of Amina's sons, Aziz, asserted that he did not see any justification for excision, and would never consider taking more than one wife. Faarax expressed the same feelings and talked about how unacceptable it was that men beat their wives.

Thus, being in the camp has not only altered the transmission of the Somali language and made young people critical of clan dynamics. The role of women is also being renegotiated, as life in Kakuma contributes, to some extent, to reshaping young women's perception of their rights and the place they deserve in society.

Conclusion: Somalis from Kakuma

In summary, Somali youth in Kakuma claim multiple belongings. Many assert that the camp is home, as this is where they grew up and live, and say that they are both Somali and Kenyan. Settling in a new environment characterized by cultural diversity has influenced their acquisition of some cultural practices and codes, such as the command of the language or a respect for tribalism. They more readily identify the influence of their host society than that of other ethnic groups, perhaps because the recognition between youth first emerged from common Kenyan references in regard to their education, media or laws. Also, young women are more and more explicitly rejecting traditional practices, which is provoking the resistance of their community, but also seems to be prompting changes. In that respect, migration could have a lasting effect on the dynamics between generations or genders, as Colson (1999), Essed et al. (2004) and Kusow (2007) have emphasized.

Kakuma's "enforced proximity" (Tomlinson 1999: 181) may not have produced a cosmopolitan disposition, but a convivial culture (Gilroy 2006) has emerged among the camp's inhabitants. They have learned to live close to one another, and to deal with their differences in a way that does not create insurmountable communication problems. The pacification efforts of organizations working in the camp, as well as the establishment of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, have helped. But social relationships that have progressively developed between the members of various ethnic groups have probably played a more important part. While cultural differences have become ordinary and are tolerated, they are not necessarily praised. Clear limits to integration exist. Indeed, while conflicts are limited, inter-ethnic friendships are relatively rare, and inter-ethnic marriages are taboo. Social life remains mostly mono-ethnic, even though young people value their capacity to engage with people of different backgrounds. By going to school together, they have been forced to interact on a daily basis. While this initially created frictions, over time, students have developed common references and practices, and have learned to negotiate with their differences, as a 32-year-old youth leader notes: "We came to understand one another. Now it is ok. Sometimes there are problems on the football court, but we manage to solve them." Thus, the lasting coexistence has resulted in the development of a culture of conviviality, especially in the young generation.

I have also shown that life in the camp with its interaction between various ethnic groups has resulted in a transformation of young Somalis' ethnic identity. They highlight the influence of their environment on their sense of belonging and their cultural codes, but also stress that they feel Somali, alluding to their religious practice, their respect for their elders or their way of socializing. Hence, what has been observed in other migratory contexts is also relevant to refugee camps: ethnic identity can be conceived as a fluid social construction (Meintel 1993; Oriol 1985). Moreover, exposure to other cultures leads young people, and particularly women, to dispute some traditional practices and social structures, which generates tensions between young women and men, and between generations. Women are asserting themselves and, to some extent, transgressing cultural traditions, questioning their place in society, inspired partly by Kenyan law, which forbids early marriage and female genital mutilation, but also by their encounter with people from various backgrounds and the grammar of human rights. Their challenge meets with resistance but also slowly influences social dynamics. Such changes make the idea of returning to Somalia especially difficult to consider for young women. Indeed, they believe that their progressive way of thinking and dressing – they remark that their veils are not as strict and all-encompassing as those worn by women in Somalia, and some have piercings hidden under their veils, despite their parents' strong disapproval – would not be welcomed back in their country of origin.

Chapter 6 – A world in movement: The camp as a connected space

Nin ann dhul marini dhaayo maleh. / He who has not travelled in the world has no eyes.

Somali proverb

After 28-year-old Saalim visited the photography exhibition that my students and I had organized, he invited me to his home to show me his own photo albums. I had never seen such an impressive collection of photographs in Kakuma. He had a few old family portraits, many recent photographs of friends, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, relatives, and a few women wearing smart outfits he had tailored. I asked who the people in the pictures were. “This is my sister, she is in Canada.” “This is my cousin, he is in Australia.” “This is my brother in Nairobi.” “This one is my uncle who works in Dubai.” “This is my childhood friend on the day of his departure to America.” It went on and on. Nearly all the people portrayed lived elsewhere, often very far from Kenya and Somalia. While most people in the camp do not have photographs to display, their relatives are also spread out around the globe. Everyone seems to know someone in Canada, have several relations in the U.S., family members elsewhere in Kenya, others in Somalia, some in Sudan, the Gulf States or Europe, or maybe in Australia. Many have friends in South Africa. Those who have permanently left the camp are not the only ones on the move. Somalis in Kakuma also hit the road regularly. Many visit Nairobi or Mombasa during work or school holidays. Some go to Kitale, an agricultural town situated more than 400 kilometres south of Kakuma, to buy goods to sell in the camp. Others go to major cities for health care, while some go back to Somalia for funerals or to look after sick relatives. Travelling is common enough that people who have never left the camp are atypical. Aziz, who once asked me if it was true that there was no greenery in cities, says he used to be embarrassed about being untravelled: “When I was young, I felt ashamed when people talked of Nairobi. They would say: ‘Do you know that street? Do you know that place?’ And I would just slip away because I felt I should have known. I felt ashamed that others had money to go and we didn’t. My family never left the camp during holidays. The others were always leaving.”

Located in a remote area and inhabited by people with limited financial means, Kakuma does feel far removed. Yet it is far from being disconnected. Despite policies restricting movement, many people travel back and forth between the camp, the rest of Kenya and, in some cases, Somalia, allowing them to benefit from humanitarian assistance while maintaining an economic activity. Indeed, the camp experience encourages the invention and adoption of new strategies for economic survival. In addition to marketing their skills, some trade, import and export basic goods and food. Thus, a number of the refugees living in Kakuma participate in the local, regional and cross-border economy, through relationships and networks that sometimes pre-existed their flight (Crisp 2003: 21). Somali refugees also interact regularly with their compatriots around the globe by phone and Internet, while mass media bring daily news from all over the world. Some of their former neighbours have been resettled to the West, others have travelled by their own means to South Africa, Saudi Arabia or Europe. Many have moved to Kenyan cities, some have returned to Somalia. Refugees who have left the camp also return to visit. Those who moved to urban areas in Kenya or in neighbouring countries to earn money return periodically to see their family and friends. More exceptionally, someone who was resettled pays a visit. Also, aid workers travel back and forth, and researchers, journalists, government officials, donors and other dignitaries stop by from time to time. So despite being located in an isolated area, the camp is far from being cut off: it is “indissolubly linked to both local and extralocal places through what might be called networks” (Escobar 2001: 143).

I have alluded a number of times to the influence of this connectedness on young people’s perception of the camp. It has given them a greater understanding of the limitations imposed by their status and fuelled their dreams of moving further afield. It has also made them familiar with the recurring populist threats by politicians to force them back to Somalia. Kakuma seems like an exemplification of Appadurai’s reflection on the interconnected effect of mass media and migration on people’s imagination (1996). While large-scale migration is not new, its juxtaposition with "a rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations" is, and it distinguishes today's movements from those of the past. Combined, the two factors "seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination" (p.4). This collective vision that is formed upon contact with the media goes beyond borders, even if people themselves are not in movement. Realms of imagined selves and worlds proliferate, whereas until recently, the avenues for social life were relatively limited. The immediate environment no longer strictly dictates social reproduction. This does not turn the world into a friendlier place where mobility is truly higher: "Instead, what is implied is that even in the meanest and most hopeless of lives, the most brutal and dehumanizing of circumstances, the harshest of lived inequalities are now open to the play of the imagination" (p.54). Such knowledge that might stimulate action and agency does not signal the death of the local, but makes it inseparable from the global (p.31, 63-64).

While people's imagined paths may have been multiplied, real movement for undesirable populations such as refugees is subject to increasingly strict measures of control, making their travels complicated and costly. These are not desirable tourists, to borrow from Bauman, who speaks of a new polarization and hierarchization of the world between "tourists" and "vagabonds," magnified by globalization.[109] The former before whom borders disappear, travel because they want to. The latter are in movement "because *they have no other bearable choice*" (1998: 93). They are "involuntary tourists" who often travel illegally, "sometimes paying more for the crowded steerage of a stinking unseaworthy boat than others pay for business-class gilded luxuries – and are frowned upon, and, if unlucky, arrested and promptly deported, when they arrive" (1998: 89).

In this chapter, I explore the effects of the camp's connectedness. I will first consider movements that take refugees outside the camp, permanently or temporarily. I will then look at the influence of the "world" visiting the camp through the media, communications and people. I will conclude with remarks on the influence of Kenya's political landscape on refugees' (lack of) settledness. I contend that constant interaction with people across the globe and awareness of their conditions are a source of frustration, but also become the motor for action by making Kakuma an even more intolerable place. Through mass media and communications, people have developed an idea of a dream world and of the conditions (real or fictitious) in which other people live. There is no reason for refugees not to aspire to a better life. While the imagined possibilities are endless, real life is full of limitations. Noting that a familiarity with the wider world increases the state of discontent among people left at the margins is not new. The phenomenon must be discussed, however, as it has a profound effect on the experience of the camp.

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[109] Such an interpretation echoes Duffield's observation (2007: 227) on the separation of the world between good and bad, useful and useless, the included and the excluded.

1. When the camp visits the world

I have at several points referred to the broad resettlement programme that started in 2006, targeting those Somalis who had been in the camp the longest, regardless of their ethnicity. Resettlement is only one way of exiting the camp, but it is certainly the most sought-after. In the absence of this option, a number of refugees leave by their own means, either heading to a more desirable location in Kenya or another country, or returning to Somalia. In a context where return seems highly unlikely due to the prolonged nature of the conflict, and resettlement remains an exceptional solution, irregular migration can become the most easily conceivable option despite its inherent risks.

When studying movements of Somalis, authors commonly underscore their tradition of mobility as a survival strategy, owing to their nomadic heritage and also as a result of trade patterns and work-related migrations (Horst 2006, 2006a; Kleist 2004; Lewis 1994: 146). Coping strategies are likely to differ depending on the particular social and historical context. Chatty (2010: 336-337) notes that young Palestinians are turning to religious belief and political activism “to make sense of their surroundings as well as expend their energy and release their sense of political and social frustration.” For Somalis, migration is a culturally conceivable, and valued, coping mechanism. In the Somali culture, travel can be understood as a rite of passage into a higher social status, as long as it serves the community and not only the individual (Rousseau et al. 1998: 390-92). This makes migration a path that is more easily envisioned. Moreover, Somalis’ movements are facilitated by the existence of a large diaspora and transnational networks that result from this tradition of mobility (Horst 2006; Kleist

2004). While mobility may not have been traditionally central to the life of all Somalis but primarily to pastoralists, who tend to originate from majority clans (Zimmerman 2009: 88), it is possible that, once in exile, migration also became fundamental to non-nomadic groups through their exposure to fellow Somalis and the camp's interaction with the world. Horst has coined the term "transnational nomads" to describe the Somali inclination toward "looking for greener pastures, strong social network that entails the obligation to assist each other in surviving and risk-reduction through strategically dispersing investments in family members and activities" (2006b: 14). This belonging to networks (as well as the ability to make a living through other means than humanitarian assistance) allows some refugees to recover a degree of autonomy.

In his search for opportunities, 25-year-old Ali is the personification of strategic mobility. He came to Kenya in 2002, when he was 12. He did not leave Somalia because of direct violence but due to side effects of the protracted conflict: his living conditions were miserable and he had no access to education. In Baidoa, Somalia, he had met people who had studied in Kenya and were doing well. He wanted to follow in their footsteps. He travelled slowly through southern Somalia, polishing shoes to earn a living, until he reached the Kenyan border and crossed into Mandera. There, he found a relative who agreed to support his primary education. After four years, the relative could no longer help. Ali headed to Nairobi, where another of his relatives was studying at university. This relative gave him money to travel to Dadaab, where he would have access to free education. It was only at that point that he registered as a refugee. He finished primary school in 2007 and, while waiting for his final results, visited his family in Baidoa. When he was there, he earned about six dollars a day teaching English. After a few months, the exam results were announced and he returned to Dadaab to enrol in high school. This time, he had money in his pocket, which allowed him to start a business and get married while he was studying. When he finished his secondary education in 2011, he headed to Dolo Ado, in the Somali region of Ethiopia, where his brother lives. He believed he would have good work opportunities there, as refugees were arriving from Somalia in large numbers because of the food crisis. He found a job with Save the Children. In the meantime, his wife, who had moved to Kakuma with their child, contacted him to tell him to come and join them, as they had a resettlement opportunity. After a few months in Ethiopia, he went back to

Dadaab and asked for a transfer to Kakuma, but realized the process would be lengthy. So he took matters into his own hands and travelled to Nairobi. As the hoped-for resettlement was not yet happening, he enrolled in a college diploma programme in community development. He studied for two months, until his wife informed him that she had received a resettlement-related letter and that he had to show up in Kakuma. He arrived there in September 2012 and, over a year later, was still there. During that year, he had opened a shop and enrolled in further studies, and was planning to travel to Juba, South Sudan, to sell goods imported from Kenya. Ali's moves are motivated by his search for opportunities in a context where they are scarce. He has been assisted by relatives and, in return, is supporting his family in Somalia whenever he is able to. While his path is remarkable, I do not think it is exceptional.

In this section, I will discuss movements of refugees leaving the camp, through resettlement or irregular migration to Kenya, neighbouring countries and further abroad. I will not go further into repatriation, as it is hardly ever considered as an option by youth, who mostly imagine Somalia as a dreadfully violent territory. I will address the subject of repatriation in Chapter 9, when discussing the future.

1.1 All my friends are gone: The resettlement of refugees

When I first met Khadra in October 2012 she told me, as did so many others, that she would soon be leaving for America. She was heading to Georgia. I knew that such assertions often said more about the speaker's dreams than about reality. She did add that her name had not yet been posted for departure, but she had completed her medical check and security clearance, and really wished her turn would come before these expired in less than six months. She also hoped the rest of her family would go before her, so she would not land alone in a foreign country. (Being 20 years old, she was considered independent, and thus her resettlement file had been separated from that of her family. Hence, although all members of her family should at some point travel to the same destination, they might leave months or years apart.) Two months later, her name appeared on the board where the names of departing refugees are listed, a board that refugees consult religiously every second day. The rest of her family was not on it. I did not hear this from her first, but from her friend Faarax. It was the news of the day and word was spreading very quickly among the Somalis.

Four days later, she was already leaving the camp, heading to Nairobi. Although she had dreamed of this drastic change for years, she was extremely agitated: she was boarding a plane for the first time in her life and had never been away from her family. A couple of days after she landed in the U.S., she declared she hated it and wanted to be back in Kakuma. She held to that line for quite a few months. The adaptation was difficult. She was arriving on her own in a foreign country, with extremely limited means and under pressure to find a job rapidly. Then her discourse began to change: she started saying that she was doing all right, adjusting. In Kakuma, her friends remarked that it was always like that. At first people hated it, wanted to be back in the camp, felt disoriented, and kept up very regular contact with people in Kakuma. Then they got used to their new setting and phoned a little less often. In the following months, I saw a number of people leave, with the pattern repeating itself.

What I witnessed more often, however, was people endlessly waiting to go, endlessly talking about their hopes of finally seeing their names on the board or being called for a resettlement interview. I heard countless complaints about the lengthiness, unpredictability and unfairness of the process. I heard so many stories about the foolishness of the questions asked during interviews. (Nuradin: "They ask you questions to test your patience. 'Will you get married before leaving?' 'Are you al-Shabab?' 'Are you gay?'") Resettlement was a constant topic of discussion and preoccupation. I did not ask about it during interviews, quickly understanding that a vast majority of refugees would bring it up themselves, as going further west is, they believe, the only path to a decent future. Legally integrating in Kenya is ruled out, due to the country's lack of openness on the matter. Returning to Somalia is often unthinkable and when it is not completely excluded, the return is usually set in some intangible future. Therefore, when they recount their stories, reflections on resettlement are necessarily a key element. Sometimes the tale is a very sour account of failure. Often, it is a story of waiting and seeing so many other people leaving. Faarax, for example, mentions that of the 18 members of his former football team, all but four have left for America, most of them between 2008 and 2010: "Everyday, I thought I was next. Now I am just tired."

This brings to mind Cindy Horst's writings on *buufis* and the article of Rousseau et al. (1998: 388, 395) on the "pre-migration dream of leaving" of young Somalis in Ethiopia and Somaliland. In the latter, the authors argue that through the dream of leaving, young people manage to survive and escape despair, but are also at risk of becoming increasingly frustrated and of losing touch with reality, if their hopes remain unfulfilled. Horst (2006a: 143-44) explains that the term *buufis* is used by Somalis in Dadaab to refer to both the resettlement dream and resettlement itself. Furthermore, it alludes to people's longing for resettlement and the madness that sometimes affects those whose wishes do not become reality (in Kakuma, youth used the term to refer to resettlement but not to speak of the dream of resettlement, unlike older people who also defined it as the "endless hope for something.") While this phenomenon must be understood in light of the mobility that characterizes the life of Somalis, it is also a novelty, "triggered by the fact that, due to transnational flows of remittances and information, refugees in remote camps like Dadaab can compare their lives in the camps to those of others elsewhere" (p.144). Another life can thus be imagined. The consciousness of another reality can stimulate hope and agency and inspire people to devise a migratory project, or allow the creation of transnational networks of solidarity. However, it can also trigger dissatisfaction by increasing awareness of global inequalities (p.150-152). The influence of global connectedness on aspiration is not unique to refugees: a young Turkana told me he really longed to move to Canada. His best friend, a Ugandan refugee, had been resettled there and after hearing from him and the media that it was a good country, he wanted to go too.

A lot has been written about resettlement and refugees' focus on the question. Several authors have examined how the occurrence of resettlement and its visibility strengthen the desire to leave, possibly motivating the choice of a specific camp, or even pushing some to leave their country in the hope of being resettled (e.g., Horst 2006a; Jansen 2008; Moret et al. 2006). In Kakuma, I met refugees from Puntland, a relatively peaceful region located in northeastern Somalia, who explained they had come to the camp because they "wanted to go to America." Researchers have also examined how people shape their stories and identities to fit presumed resettlement guidelines, possibly creating insecurity or claiming to be vulnerable for resettlement purposes (Jansen 2008; Montclos 1999). Kagwanja and Juma (2008) have discussed the interaction between resettlement, the stereotyping of specific groups of refugees and security concerns. Without discussing the subject at length, I will now look at resettlement, as it is a central preoccupation in the camp and a constant topic of discussion, rumours, hope and despair. I will also consider the categories and labels created by the process.

1.1.1 A selected few: Process and numbers

Although refugees focus on resettlement, the proportion of people leaving Kakuma every year remains small. For example, approximately 1,000 departed in 2012, which is comparable to the figure for 2011 (UNHCR 2011 and 2012). While annual figures are proportionately small, significant numbers of Somalis have left through various programmes over time. Between 1995 and 2011, some 57,500 Somali refugees from Kenya were resettled to third countries, most often the U.S. (UNHCRa, June 2012). A good number of these most certainly left from Kakuma. Somalis who arrived in the late 1990s and claim to be among the few first arrivals still left in the camp are not wrong: in May 2012, less than 3,000 of the over 12,000 Somalis who were in the camp in 2000 still lived there. Of course, not everyone who has left has been resettled. Some must have returned to Somalia or settled elsewhere, while others must have died.

Priority for resettlement is given to refugees whose lives might be at risk in the camp. Throughout the years, specific programmes have focused on particular groups of refugees, either for their assumed vulnerability or for their very limited prospects of repatriation or local integration. The latter was the justification for the programme launched in 2006 to resettle Somalis in protracted displacement to the U.S. The programme initially focussed on refugees who had been registered in 1991 and 1992, and progressively expanded to those who had done so prior to 2005. In theory, all the first comers have therefore left the camp, except for those whose cases for resettlement were rejected. However, as the UNHCR head of protection explained, a number of cases were lost or forgotten when staff left. The office was in the process of cleaning up the resettlement database, which might explain why in 2013 I witnessed the departure of several people who had arrived in the 1990s. In addition, some refugees who arrived in Kenya in the 1990s did not officially register with UNHCR until 2006, while other cases have been put on hold because of suspected fraud. The necessary investigations, which can lead to resumption of a case, a warning, permanent ineligibility or a referral for prosecution, are being conducted very slowly. Fraud, lying during the registration or resettlement interview, or lack of credibility are the reasons for nearly all disqualifications – disqualifications that can if necessary be overlooked when serious protection concerns arise. Very few people do not fit the refugee definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention or are found inadmissible for security reasons. Fraud includes registering twice with different identities; lying about one's life story, family composition, name, clan or locality of origin; or registering with fake identity documents.[110] It leads to rejection, as the UNHCR claims that these acts make it impossible to determine a person's true identity. Credibility problems often arise, as people change their stories between the time of arrival, the refugee status determination interview and the resettlement interview. Family sponsorship programmes also allowed a number of refugees to be resettled, but the programme was closed down in 2004 due to fraud-related problems. When I was in Kakuma, it was expected to resume, with the incorporation of routine DNA testing. Hundreds of cases were also wiped out not because of fraud committed by refugees, but due to a major corruption scandal in the UNHCR office in the late 1990s that led to an interruption of resettlement activities. More than 70 people were found to be involved in a criminal ring extorting sums of as much as 6,000 USD from refugees for resettlement-related services, even though all the UNHCR services are meant to be free. Thousands of refugees whose claims were being processed when the scheme was uncovered had their cases put on hold for fear they might be involved in the fraud. At that point, it was understood these cases would be reopened, and a number of them were (HRW 2002: 176-82; UN General Assembly 2001: 2). However, the head of protection in Kakuma indicates that some never were. Fraud, both by UNHCR and by refugees, will be further explored in the next chapter, as it relates to the question of trust and mistrust.

The resettlement process itself is long and tedious. The UNHCR does screening interviews and checks for cheating, which takes several months. The organization then hands over the individual or family file to the embassy of the potential resettlement country and the International Organization for Migration, which is in charge of the logistics and administration of the process. Between further interviews by country officials and preliminary security clearances by the receiving country, it takes at least two years to get a final answer for a case submitted to the U.S., the most common destination for Somalis. Once a case is accepted, refugees undergo a medical examination and an in-depth security check, both with short-duration validity. Hence if people do not leave rapidly once their case is accepted and both clearances have been given, the procedure must be repeated over and over, which commonly happens.

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[110] What qualifies as "fraud" for UNHCR could also be understood as mere survival strategies. Registering twice, for example, is usually a way to obtain more food assistance. While it is indeed a violation of the rule, it is questionable to morally condemn people who are misappropriating aid not to become rich but to feed their families. This is especially true in a context where already insufficient food rations are regularly cut because of shortfalls in funding and therefore do not meet the basic nutritional needs of the refugees. For a different perspective on the topic, see Kibreab (2004). This is further discussed in Chapter 7.

1.1.2 Creating categories and labels

A consequence of the resettlement process is the creation of specific labels for refugees in the camp, which in turn affects people's perceptions and identity (see Zetter 1991). There are those who are waiting to go. They have successfully gotten through the process and hope to be departing soon, the common view being that no one is sure to go before they actually leave. Then there are a selected few who have been picked by the World University Service of Canada to study at a Canadian university. These are seen as a kind of elite; unlike other resettled refugees who will have to struggle to earn their living once they land in a foreign land, they are being given a passport to education. There are those who are at some other stage of the process: perhaps they have been interviewed by UNHCR, or have had their case approved and referred to an embassy and are waiting for further interviews. Then there are those who are hoping for their name to come up for a resettlement interview. They have usually arrived fairly recently and anticipate that once all the earlier arrivals are gone, it will be their turn. And there are the rejected cases, those who can no longer hope for resettlement. A number of these are Bantus. Seven hundred of the 12,000 who were targeted for resettlement have been left behind, according to Abdullahi, who is one of them. The "rejected" label is heavy to carry, as it symbolizes failure. I became aware of this after an interview with a Bajuni elder who cried when I asked what lay ahead for his children. He said he had failed them. I thought he meant by fleeing his country and bringing his children to Kakuma. When we left, the young man who was accompanying me explained that he was crying because he had been rejected for resettlement, and thus could not take his children abroad and, in that respect, had failed to give them the only valuable future he could have offered. After that, I noticed that people commonly mentioned that a given refugee had been "rejected" in a tone that made it sound like a confidential and taboo piece of information.

While parents usually stay in the camp with their descendants after receiving a negative resettlement response, young people who have finished their studies often start making plans to leave by their own means. A number of those who have little short-term hope of resettlement because of their relatively recent arrival do the same.

1.2 Searching for opportunities: Irregular movements

> Many people, especially those with no resettlement chances, when they are tired of the life of refugees, they leave the camp. Most go to Nairobi, others to Nakuru and Eldoret [in Kenya]. A few go back to Somalia, mainly to stable places like Puntland and Somaliland, others to South Africa or Europe. I had two friends who went to Nairobi. Then they got money from a brother, so they went to Mombasa, took a boat to Mozambique and proceeded to South Africa. Some go from Sudan to Libya and then to Italy. They give money to smugglers to take them. I also had a friend who went to Sweden. One day, I no longer saw him around. Then I saw him on Facebook. I asked where he was. He was in Stockholm. I asked how he had managed to get there, if he had been resettled by UNHCR. "No, I resettled myself," he said.
>
> Abdi, 23 years old

For many, the camp is home, but a home that has little to offer, apart from education and resettlement. When these possibilities are exhausted or, in the case of resettlement, remain a faraway prospect, it is a home one should leave. Movements between the camp and Kenyan cities – for work, business opportunities, holiday, family visits or to seek health care – are ongoing. As Abdi underlines, others go further, leaving for Western countries, the Gulf States or other African countries, most often South Africa and Sudan. Those who leave for nearby locations usually come back when there is a verification, to maintain their refugee status. Those who migrate further away are less likely to do so. Although movement are relatively widespread, they are not easy or danger-free. While refugees say they can bribe their way in Kenya, travelling abroad is strenuous and expensive and entails taking considerable risks.

The choice of a destination (when such choice is possible) depends on many factors, in particular the presence of relatives and the family's strategy – members of an extended family sometimes take up residence in different sites and countries (camps, towns, African and

European countries, etc.) to be prepared to face all eventualities. The possibility of obtaining legal residency; education and employment prospects; the proximity of the country of origin; historical, cultural or economic ties and knowledge of the language will also influence people's choices. The existence of known routes and smuggling networks, as well as financial resources – a trip to Europe costs several thousand dollars – are also important elements (Horst 2006a: 154; Jacobsen 2005: 40; Montclos 2003: 46; Moret et al. 2006: 9-10, 43, 86, 124; Van Hear 2004: 3, 6; Zimmerman 2009: 78, 84-85, 92). The actual destination of refugees is sometimes left to chance, decided by smugglers and agents who negotiate the passage of the undocumented (ICMPD 2007: 30; Moret et al. 2006: 43, 109).

In the following pages, I will first consider movements from Kakuma to the rest of Kenya and then focus on journeys to other countries.

1.2.1 Finding work and business opportunities in the rest of Kenya

Although encampment is not enshrined in Kenyan law, refugees have been effectively required to reside in Kakuma or Dadaab by the Kenyan authorities for the last two decades. Those wishing to travel legally must obtain a "movement pass" from the Government's Department of Refugee Affairs and UNHCR. Such passes are only granted to refugees in cases involving urgent health issues that cannot be treated in the camps, further education, the death of a relative elsewhere in Kenya, tracing of family members, embassy visits, purchase of stock for camp-based trading or security threats in the camps (HRW 2009: 44-45; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 179). These restrictions contravene Kenya's national and international obligations (HRW 2009: 45-47; Lindley 2011: 32).[111] Those stopped outside the camps without a movement pass are liable to arrest and a fine (HRW 2009: 45, 47). Refugees usually describe the process of obtaining such a pass as lengthy and uncertain. Policies that limit the movement of refugees are nevertheless difficult to implement systematically because they require substantial human and material resources. They often manifest themselves in periodic raids and arbitrary arrests (Crisp 2003: 23; Jacobsen 2005: 31-35).

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[111] Section 16(1)(a) of Kenya's Refugee Act states that recognized refugees should be entitled to rights guaranteed by the international conventions to which Kenya is party. Article 26 of the 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates that refugees who are lawfully on a country's territory have the right to choose their place of residence and move freely on the country's territory. Article 12 of the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also provides that "everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence" and that such rights can only be subjected to restrictions by law, and that restrictions must be "necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others."

Regardless of these constraints, Somalis have a long tradition of moving between the camps and urban areas in Kenya, travelling by bus and buying their way through the police checkpoints that are set up on the road (Campbell et al. 2011: 20-22). Marx (1990: 198) maintains that "the better the refugees adapt to the new environment, the more 'illegal' they tend to become." Many have found ways to integrate informally into the economy, often without government approval and almost entirely outside of the legal system (Banki 2004: 12-13; RCK 2012: 29).[112] Families might split up between the camp and Kenyan cities. Wives and children might stay in Kakuma where they have access to affordable living and education, while breadwinners, mostly men, travel to cities and send money back. Young people might also pursue further studies in Nairobi, where the Somali diaspora provides an important safety net (Campbell et al. 2011: 115). Several of those who receive regular, sufficient remittances have settled outside the camp and come back when they run out of money or a new registration takes place, so as not to lose their ration card and prospective resettlement opportunities. Reasons for leaving the camp are not limited to livelihood and educational opportunities. Pavalleno et al. (2010: 14) emphasize that people also leave because of insecurity, inadequate medical services and the climate.

Movements to Nairobi are common enough for the Union of Somali Youth (USY) to have started a branch there, founded by members who have moved to the city. In its meetings in Kakuma, the USY always mentions the number of students in its literacy classes who have recently dropped out and the reasons why. Every week, several more move to Nairobi. Two young men who were very active USY members, Mahdi and Faarax, left for Eastleigh, Nairobi's Somali neighbourhood, while I was in Kakuma. They were tired of the camp where they had both grown up, and wanted to find work in the city. They hoped to earn up to 15,000 KSh a month, which sounded optimistic. I accompanied them to the daily bus, which was, as always, crowded with Somalis travelling to the capital. They each had 500 KSh (less than 10 CAD) in their pockets. Although they did not have movement passes, they were not worried about potential controls along the way. They explained that the bus was charging a slightly higher rate than the other company to cover payments at police checkpoints. Hence, they were confident they would not be harassed, despite having been told that since the relocation directive controls had become stricter (see Chap. 3, 1.1). They mentioned that the other bus company's vehicles were in better condition, and thus more reliable, but that it was hard to board them without the necessary documents. They did reach Nairobi safely, where I saw them a few weeks later. They were staying with relatives and looking for jobs. They seemed a bit lost, but were getting used to the city. They kept running into people they knew from Kakuma in the streets of Eastleigh. Mahdi, who had never seen a city before, was spending hours in the streets, watching people, exploring his new surroundings. When we parted, the Somali Kenyan friend who had accompanied me commented that they would be just fine: "Somalis support one another." More than six months later, they were still in Nairobi, had only worked irregularly and were still looking for something more stable. While moving to Nairobi is relatively common, the transition is not necessarily easy. Aden left Kakuma in 2009, aged 27, after he was turned down for resettlement. He struggled for a full year in Eastleigh, looking for a job. "I had no relatives there. I would wait until people left the mosque to go there to sleep. Sometimes, for a full day, I would not even get a cup of tea. At some point, I started helping people writing applications. They would give me 500 shillings. It was a very hard life."

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[112] A 2010 study reports that Somalis in urban areas are mostly hired informally by fellow countrymen who have businesses, or for domestic work (Pavanello et al.: 21). It indicates that some 43 percent of urban refugees are self-employed. Businesses range from petty trade to real estate, import and export, money transfer operations or livestock trade and are extremely variable in size, going from street hawking to registered multinationals.

When I visited Mahdi and Faarax in Eastleigh, I had an interesting encounter. While taking a look into a rundown shopping mall, I started talking to a young tailor with a small shop. When I said I had just come from Kakuma, he asked if I knew the Don Bosco training centre. He explained that he was a refugee from Somalia and had lived in Kakuma, where he learned tailoring at Don Bosco. Once he had completed the training, armed with his new skills, he had left for Nairobi and opened a business. I asked about problems related to his lack of documents. He said he was earning enough money to be able to manage and preferred being independent, rather than living in the hardship of Kakuma. There was nothing exceptional about his situation. In 2011, UNHCR and several NGOs estimated that between 80,000 and

100,000 refugees were living in Nairobi, some legally, others without papers. The greatest proportion of these were Somalis. Refugees have also established themselves in smaller cities where the cost of living is lower, such as Eldoret, Kisumu and Mombasa (Campbell et al. 2011: 25-26, 30).

However, as I have already noted, relocation threats were changing the dynamic, because living in urban areas was getting more complicated. Even before that, refugees said that settling outside the camp had become increasingly expensive. Not only was the cost of living increasing, but the bribes they had to pay to policemen were ever larger. While I was not in Kenya when the attack on Westgate Mall occurred,[113] it is likely that living without documents in urban areas became even trickier and more costly after that event. A few refugees in Kakuma claim they can solve the problem by buying identity documents (ID). For example, 20-year-old Jamal said that if he was not picked for resettlement, he would not consider working as a refugee, as salaries were too low, but would do it as a Kenyan: “You can just buy an ID card for 20,000 or 30,000 KSh [235 CAD to 350 CAD]. Then you are Kenyan. You can’t do it here. You have to go to Nairobi. I know a man who is a driver. He was rejected for resettlement in 2010. He gave up his ration card and went to buy an ID. He works as a Kenyan and earns a lot of money. That is what I would do.” This was not news, as I had been told several times before about refugees in Dadaab who had acquired genuine Kenyan identity cards through corrupt officials and later faced exclusion from resettlement. (Since they were now registered as Kenyan citizens, they were no longer eligible for resettlement [see Lindley 2011a: 36].) However, Jamal probably underestimated the price, as the media recently reported on the purchase of national IDs by refugees for up to 100,000 KSh (Wafula, 7 Sept. 2013). The acquisition of IDs by Somali refugees is not a new phenomenon. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2007: 9) wrote about the practice already occurring in the early 1990s. It specified that cards were obtained by bribing elders, registration officers and the provincial administrator for sums of up to 2,000 KSh. In 2005, a re-registration with fingerprinting also revealed that a number of refugees were in possession of Kenyan identification documents (DRA circ. 2010). Not all refugees had to buy their IDs: politicians seeking to increase the number of their supporters have also distributed some to refugees (Lindley 2011a: 36; Menkhaus 2012a: 2).

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[113] On 21 September 2013, gunmen laid siege to a popular high-end shopping centre, the Westgate Mall. More than 60 people were killed in the attack, claimed by al-Shabab, who said it was in retaliation for Kenya’s military involvement in Somalia. A week later, politicians started suggesting that camps for Somali refugees in Kenya should be closed and Somali refugees relocated to other countries by UNHCR (BBC, 30 Sept. 2013; East African Centre for Law and Justice, 3 Oct. 2013).

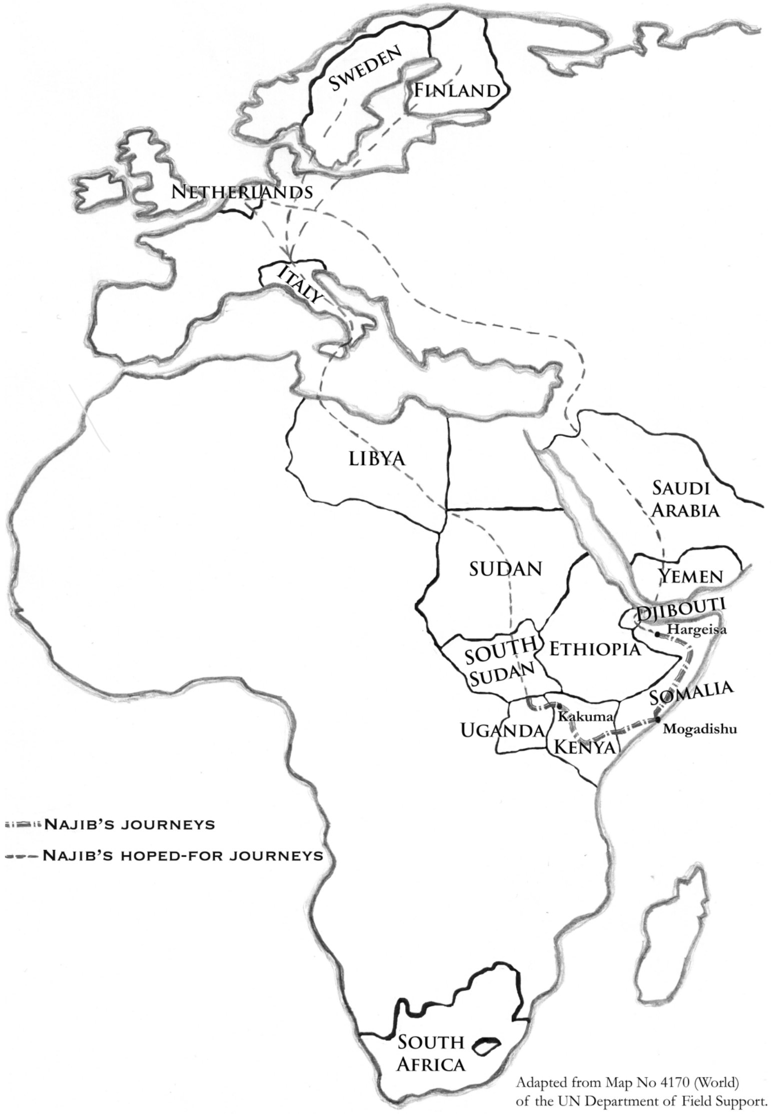
While increased risks and costs attached to living in cities have motivated some to return to Kakuma or Dadaab, they can also lead others to migrate further afield.

1.2.2 Heading abroad: Reaching the West, other African countries and the Gulf States

Not long after I arrived in Kakuma, Aziz came to ask for advice: he wanted tips on how to stay safe while conducting research on a sensitive topic. He had started gathering information for a documentary film on *tahriib*, or irregular migration, from Kakuma. A few days before, he had found out that one of his friends had drowned at sea, trying to reach Europe. The family was gathering money to pay for the funeral. He believed people took such risks out of despair, either because the length of the resettlement process discouraged them or because their cases had been rejected. He also said that some received significant help to travel from relatives who hoped that paying for one expensive trip would be cheaper than providing monthly support. He had found a number of refugees who were planning to leave, some who had attempted to go and a smuggler who had agreed to speak with him. One of his prospective interviewees was Najib, whom I met several months later.

Nineteen-year-old Najib had tried to enter Italy via Libya from Kakuma but had been stopped on his way, at the border between Uganda and South Sudan. He had been stranded in Uganda for a while, then managed to gather enough money to head back to Kakuma. The short trip had cost him his savings of several hundred dollars. This was not his first attempt to leave. Inspired by people who had undertaken the journey through Djibouti, he had tried to take it himself at the end of 2008, when he was 15, but had been stopped in Somaliland by his family. He arrived in Kakuma from Mogadishu a few months later. These episodes did not deter him from striving to reach Europe, which he saw as his only true option. All his family was still in Somalia and he desperately wanted to find a way to earn money to support them. He was not able to do so from Kakuma and therefore believed he had to get to a country where it would be possible. He was planning to leave again as soon as he had enough money. He estimated that

Figure 13: Najib's journey


Sweden
Finland
Netherlands
Italy
Libya
Saudi Arabia
Sudan
Yemen
Djibouti
Hargeisa
Ethiopia
South Sudan
Somalia
Uganda
Kakuma
Kenya
Mogadishu
South Africa
Najib's journeys
Najib's hoped-for journeys

Adapted from Map No 4170 (World) of the UN Department of Field Support.

he needed at least 2,000 American dollars to pay for the trip, but could earn a part of that sum in Juba, South Sudan. Once in Italy, he would keep going, hopefully all the way to Sweden, Finland or the Netherlands, "where there is good education and good living conditions and, unlike other countries, they will not force you to learn their language before you can start working." He was remarkably well informed. I asked why he had first tried to go by Djibouti, rather than Bosasso in Puntland, in northern Somalia, from which the journey was cheaper. He replied that while it was less expensive in those places, it was also riskier. He was right, something I knew from my former job. Similarly, he had ruled out South Africa, where "Somalis are not welcomed"[114] and Saudi Arabia, as "you will be returned to Somalia." So I asked how he felt about the danger related to the long journey to Europe. “Staying here is also risking my life. There is no future in Kakuma and in Somalia, there is war. There is no point in staying. All the other options are not worth it. At least, if you travel, you get rich or you die. It’s a better choice.”

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[114] Somalis have been the victims of waves of violent attacks in South Africa since the mid-2000s. For example, at least 20 Somalis were killed in Cape Town in attacks that were described as xenophobic in nature by the South African police in 2006 (BBC, 20 Oct. 2006). In 2008, some 62 foreigners were killed and another 100,000 displaced because of xenophobic violence (BBC, 28 May 2009). In 2011, in Port Elizabeth, more than 50 Somali-owned shops were attacked and looted by local residents who, according to Somali traders, resented their success (BBC, 26 May 2011).

While I heard some failed migration stories, I listened to many more successful accounts. Everyone seems to know someone who has left the camp and reached Europe or South Africa. Views on this subject are interlaced with those on resettlement opportunities. Youth who feel they have good chances of being resettled in the fairly near future usually depict the trip as unsafe and unattractive. They also stress that once in a wealthier country, life remains a struggle. Others who have been rejected for resettlement or believe their turn will not come anytime soon often see migration in a more favourable light. Among the main factors motivating refugees who have the financial and physical means to travel irregularly to another country of asylum are insecurity and the lack of a legal status or identity documents that can ensure protection and facilitate integration by allowing them to legally join the labour market or the education system (Moret et al. 2006: 9; Zimmerman 2009: 88).

This does not mean that reaching Europe, the Gulf States or even South Africa is simple. Such movements are usually described as secondary movements and are of particular concern for those in the First World, who would like asylum seekers and refugees to remain in their first country of asylum, typically neighbouring the country of origin and at a “safe distance” from rich countries (Moret et al. 2006: 10). As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, the desire to keep certain populations away from their borders has compelled Western countries to adopt a number of deterrence and interception measures. These include the introduction of visa requirements for people likely to seek asylum;[115] the imposition of heavy financial penalties on carriers accused of taking illegal migrants on board; the establishment of transit, waiting and retention centres;[116] the extraterritorial review of asylum applications; the adoption of readmission agreements with the first country of asylum or transit countries;[117] and a very low and ever-declining rate of recognition of asylum applications[118] (Agier 2008: 12, 42, 52, 77-78; Brouwer and Kumin 2003: 8-13; Moret et al. 2006: 86; Shamir 2005: 206-07; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 55; Zetter 2007: 181-82). Due to these prohibitive practices, a minority of asylum seekers and migrants make it to rich countries through legal channels (Jacobsen 2005: 1). Legal ways to seek refuge in Europe (or North America) are in practice limited to resettlement and family reunification. In theory, it is possible to seek asylum upon arrival in the territory. However, this entails accessing the territory, which is commonly done through irregular channels. The legal way is not only slow but also highly selective; hence most people seeking asylum in Europe have entered irregularly with the help of a smuggler, either by crossing the border illegally or by using forged documents or a short-term visa, regardless of the legitimacy of their claim (Horst 2006: 176-77; Jacobsen 2005: 54-57; Moret et al. 2006: 86).[119]

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[115] For example, in 2001, Canada introduced visa requirements for Hungarians (targeting Roma) and Zimbabweans, in response to the large number of asylum seekers from these two countries (Brouwer and Kumin 2003: 8). The EU has set up a common list of the non-EU member countries whose nationals must have a visa to enter the EU that includes refugee-producing countries such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia (EC 2001).

[116] Such centres, run by the police, local administrations, private security companies or NGOs, and established in inhospitable settings, such as airport hangars, former barracks, military bases, cargo containers or floating

Border closures, ever more sophisticated controls, and increasingly stringent asylum and migration policies do not have the desired effect of reducing overall migration (Human Rights Council 2012: 8). Instead, they force a perpetual reinvention of routes and destinations by

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platforms, are used to isolate "outsiders" from society, the judiciary and the public eye (Agier 2008: 12, 77-78, 81; Makaremi 2009: 91-94; Shamir 2005: 207).

[117] For example, in 2009, Italy signed a "Friendship Pact" with Libya which authorized Italy to send boats carrying migrants back to Libya without determining whether the boat carried asylum seekers or refugees, despite the fact that Libya did not treat the latter in a manner consistent with international standards (Agier 2008: 52; HRW 2009b; UNHCR 2011b: 9). Even though the pact was judged unacceptable by the European Court of Human Rights in February 2012 (Hirsi and others v. Italy), the two countries continue to cooperate on migration matters (MPC 2013: 7).

[118] Recognition rates vary greatly between countries. In the EU in 2013, 15 percent of asylum claimants were granted refugee status (Eurostat 2014:12). In 2008, less than 3 percent of asylum seekers in Greece, the entry point of 88 percent of foreign nationals into the European Union, were recognized as refugees, while less than 5 percent were granted subsidiary protection. The country's recognition rate was especially low compared with the other five main receiving countries, where the average rate was 36.2 percent (the European Court of Human Rights 2011: 125-126). The example of the Netherlands is a good illustration of declining recognition rates. In 1992, 66 percent of Somali asylum seekers were granted refugee status or a subsidiary form of protection. In 2004, the rate was down to 39 percent, and the procedure was considerably more complex, even though Somalia remained prey to conflict and insecurity (Moret et al. 2006: 41).

[119] Although statistics on these migrations are limited by their very nature, the data consistently shows that the vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers who are in Europe came irregularly (ICMDP 2009: 52). For example, 94 percent of 109 Somali refugees interviewed by Moret et al. (2006) in Switzerland and the Netherlands had arrived illegally. In 2003, Montclos (p.47) reported than an estimated 90 percent of asylum seekers and newly arrived Somali refugees in Europe had come via smuggling networks.

asylum seekers.[120] With tightening policies, travel routes become ever more complex and dangerous, and this only benefits the smugglers, who increase their prices accordingly (Arbel and Brenner 2013: 98-102; Basilien-Gainche 2011/2: 65; ICMPD 2007: 14, 22, 33; Lindley 2007: 10; Montclos 2003: 46; Moret et al. 2006: 86). People are indeed often undeterred from moving by the difficulties and risks they are likely to experience both on the way and after arrival in a rich country. As Najib stressed, in the absence of any other satisfactory option, "the world within their (global) reach [being] unbearably *inhospitable*" (Bauman 1998: 92-93), the risks might seem worth taking.

Paths to reach Europe are diverse. A Somali seeking asylum in the European Union (EU) might have travelled from Kakuma to Nairobi by road, then flown to a EU country with false documents, or to Russia, whence he could have been smuggled into the EU. He may also have crossed South Sudan and Sudan, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea. He could have travelled through Somalia, boarded a boat to Yemen, then crossed Saudi Arabia and Turkey and, finally, reached Greece (ICMDP 2007: 24-27; Jureidini 2010: 7-9; Moret et al. 2006: 83-86). Throughout his journey, he will have had to dodge military and police checks.

People who arrive in Europe at considerable risk and expense still face significant barriers. In 2010, nearly 258,000 people applied for asylum in a member state of the EU. Some 55,000 of them were granted some form of protection (EC 2011: 5). Those whose claims are rejected may be forcibly returned, notwithstanding that UNHCR has issued an opinion opposing this practice. In December 2012, although UNHCR advised against the return of failed asylum seekers to south-central Somalia, the Netherlands lifted its expulsion ban, arguing that the situation had improved (AI 2014: 1; ECRE 2013: 3; UNHCR 2010: 10). Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the U.K. followed suit. For those recognized as refugees, their status remains temporary and either leads to repatriation or to the acquisition of citizenship or permanent residency. Naturalization is often limited, as the right to survival is not the right to citizenship

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[120] In 2008, Italy ranked fifth among European countries in terms of the number of asylum applications received. A large number of applicants came from Libya by sea. After an agreement was reached in 2009 allowing the return of boats from Italy to Libya, the number of asylum seekers in Italy decreased drastically. In 2010, Italy had dropped to 14th place among European countries in terms of asylum applications (UNHCR 2011b: 9). The number of asylum applicants started growing again the following year, mainly as a result of the "Arab Spring" in North Africa (UNHCR 2014a: 13).

(Ong 2006: 500).[121] Refugees lose their status by returning to their country of origin, acquiring another nationality or when reasons for flight cease to exist in their country of origin.[122] In the latter case, refugees are expected to return on a voluntary or compulsory basis. Those who remain after their application for asylum has been rejected or after their refugee (or subsidiary protection) status has been removed are in an irregular situation (ICMPD 2009: 52). Life is then spent developing strategies to evade controls. Even for others whose stay has been legitimized, settling in an environment marked by the attacks of September 11, 2001, which gave an increasingly menacing character to the "other", particularly Muslims, is difficult (Zetter 2007: 185). "A combination of various factors, including legal status, income and country of residence generally work together to limit the social advancement of refugees and asylum-seekers, preventing them from acquiring education and other social development skills" (Moret et al. 2006: 70).

While refugees usually describe travelling to another African country as easier and slightly less risky, this option is not always appealing. Youth commonly mention that Somalis are not welcome in South Africa and that Sudan is unmerciful towards refugees. In addition, if one wants to settle permanently and have access to education, Europe is seen as a better choice. But I met one Somali with a different approach: with no immediate prospects for resettlement, Zahra was studying refugee conditions in other African countries to identify those that would be more welcoming than Kenya. "In the eyes of UNHCR, I don't qualify for resettlement because I am not very vulnerable. I am not blind or handicapped or something. But I don't want to be here. It's hell. If I could get some money, I would find my way out. In Kenya, money talks. Without money, it is difficult, but I am doing some research. Maybe I could go to a better camp. Maybe I could go to Mauritius. They don't have a camp there but they are helping refugees. I haven't decided yet, but I am doing my research."

One last, unpopular possibility is to return to Somalia and look for a job in a relatively stable part of the country. While few consider this an option for themselves (see Chap. 9), many mention other young people who have done it. Yasin says that a number of his fellow students have gone to Puntland, where they got jobs after graduating from high school. He specifies that those who did so had clan affiliations that made it possible for them to move there safely and find some work. I was also told of a few people who have temporarily returned to Somalia for family reasons, but then decided to stay.

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[121] While little data on the naturalization of refugees has been compiled, the UNHCR observes that it is limited by restrictive national laws in several countries (UNHCR 2011a: 19).

[122] In Germany, for example, the status of a refugee is up for review every three years. Many lose their status due to a change in circumstances in their country of origin (ICMPD 2009: 52).

In short, the camp is strongly connected to the outside world. The scarcity of resettlement slots makes a number of people consider irregular migration, despite inherent risks and costs. In their search for opportunities, people display agency and awareness of the social forces at play. They are not simply waiting for an organization to provide them with a solution, but rather are constantly looking for ways to improve their condition. This search is fuelled by a global cognizance that derives from transnational networks, media reports and two-way movements between the camp and other locations.

2. When the world visits the camp

Movement in Kakuma is not unidirectional. Indeed, while some leave the camp for good, others regularly travel back and forth between the camp and urban areas. New refugees are constantly arriving, former refugees come and visit friends and relatives, aid workers come from all over Kenya and the world, as do various "official" visitors. Resettled refugees send back news and money and media bring information from all over the globe to the camp. Refugees in Kakuma are thus constantly engaged well beyond the camp's limits.

Resettlement and ongoing movements have significantly changed the face of the camp (and its acceptability in the eyes of its inhabitants), as well as people's expectations, and so has constant media exposure. As Appadurai underlines (1996), while mass migrations are not new, their combination with mass media is, and this has influenced the work of the imagination. This notion of imagination that transcends borders and multiplies imagined possibilities, while physical existence is geographically fixed (Escobar 2001: 143), touches on the duality of the phenomenon of *buufis* observed by Cindy Horst (2006a). She writes that "on the one hand, images cannot be satisfied and only lead to frustrations about global inequality. But on the other hand, *buufis* as a form of collective imagination provides hope in quite a hopeless situation. It also increases people's level of power and choice by making resettlement thinkable and, once a number of people have resettled, improving actual living conditions in the camps" (p.152).

In this section, I will focus on the impact of remittances and telecommunications in the camp, which lead to a greater global consciousness.

2.1 Money matters: When poor people become richer

Once in a while, a resettled refugee comes to visit his relatives and friends who are still in the camp. Such people are usually met with unrealistically high expectations. Gebre, an Ethiopian refugee who had moved to the Netherlands a few years previously, visited with a TV crew who were shooting a story on the path he took from his homeland to Europe via Kakuma. I ran into him when he had just arrived. He was very moved to be in the camp again and eager to see people with whom he had lived for years. When I saw him for a second time on the following day, his mood had changed. He was close to tears. He explained that nearly everyone he encountered pretended to be happy to see him but, in reality, expected a present from him and, more importantly, help with resettlement. He had come with a few hundred euros he had raised with fellow refugees in the Netherlands to give to specific refugees. He recounted handling over 2,000 KSh to one refugee who, instead of being grateful, retorted that it was nothing, not even 25 euros. He was visibly hurt and believed that only a few individuals were genuinely pleased to see him again.

The general feeling in Kakuma is indeed that resettled refugees are successful and they are therefore expected to bring generous presents when they visit. I was repeatedly told of relatives who had left for the U.S. or Canada, where they had become university professors. I could not help doubting that so many resettled refugees had accomplished the necessary studies to secure such positions. It was sometimes assumed that those who had left were not sending enough money not because they were unable to do so but because of their newly developed individualism, a flaw acquired in the West. I could point out as much as I wanted that arriving as a refugee in the West was not easy and that if so many really had good jobs, it was likely they would send enough money back to their immediate families to help them leave the camp, but my interlocutors would respond with stories of resettled peers successfully studying, owning a new car and a nice home. They had seen photographs. Some with very close friends and siblings who had been resettled had more realistic views. Ibrahim did not think his brother, who was in Salt Lake City, Utah, had it easy. He worked in a slaughterhouse. "It would be better to be a cleaner than to work with dead chickens! But he has to keep doing it to send us money. He cannot study, because if he does, we will suffer. That is life for refugees in America. Most don't have good jobs, even if they have some knowledge."

The common impression that life is relatively comfortable for refugees in the West might result in part from the discretion of resettled refugees about difficulties they are facing and the fact that remittances do flow back to the camp as a result of resettlement.[123] Horst (2006b: 19) found that Somalis in Minneapolis often felt weighed down by the expectation of financial support for their relatives in Somalia or neighbouring countries. Yet they would not tell their families, either out of pride or because they found it unnecessary to burden their relatives with their own problems. Nearly all managed to send money, however, whether they were financially stable or not.[124] Remittances are part of an implicit contract between migrants and their families and are not strictly about money. They have a social meaning in terms of reciprocity, but also as a way to preserve social standing (Hammond 2007: 140; Lindley 2007: 2, 15-16). By triggering regular communication, remittances may also strengthen bonds between families living apart (Hammond 2007: 125).[125]

Several refugees mention receiving money from relatives on a monthly basis but also for special events or needs, such as a wedding or a medical emergency. Amounts that they cite are usually relatively small, possibly because people receiving greater sums have settled in more comfortable urban areas. In spite of their size (one hundred dollars a month, for example), these amounts are enough to make a significant difference in people's living conditions and in their capacity to start small businesses that can grow. Remittances are not only beneficial to the direct recipients. They feed into the camp economy, as families mostly spend the money on food and other goods and tend to share with relatives and neighbours (Hammond 2007: 144).[126] Horst (2006b: 5) assesses that in Dadaab, remittances "enabled the subsistence of many refugees who could not have survived otherwise in the region, considering current levels of humanitarian aid provision." Since it is common enough to benefit from remittances, refugees who do not receive such assistance often mention the fact, as it makes them significantly poorer than their peers. Aziz recalls: "I often felt God had forgotten us. No one was supporting us. We had no one in America. Most of the guys had people to rely on. They would always go to Dahabshiil [the largest Somali money transfer business, with branches across the globe] to collect money. We had nothing like that. We only had our parents."

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[123] A significant proportion of the Somali diaspora does send money to Somalia or to refugee camps. Estimates on the total volume of remittances sent by Somalis differ greatly, ranging from 350 million to 800 million USD per annum (Marchal 2012: 17-18). Many authors have underscored the financial importance of remittances, which are believed to surpass international humanitarian aid in Somalia (Hammond 2007; Horst 2004; Lindley 2007; Marchal 2012).

[124] Research focussed on remitters has shown that people struggle to meet the demands of their relatives and may feel forced to priorities work over their studies, cut their basic spending, take more than one job or incur debts (Hammond 2007: 136, 142; Hammond et al. 2011: 62; Lindley 2007a: 4, 9). Some postpone getting married, as they fear it could hamper their capacity to send back money to their relatives (Horst 2006b: 11).

[125] Interestingly, a 2005 survey by Lindley of money transfer outlets in Hargeisa, Somaliland, showed that nearly three-quarters of people who received remittances did so from their nuclear family, but that patterns of social solidarity also went beyond those close ties. A quarter of the recipients were benefiting from remittances from paternal uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins, grandparents, in-laws or friends (Lindley 2010a: 63).

Horst (2006: 29; 2006b: 4-5) estimates that at least 10 to 15 percent of refugees in Dadaab benefit from remittances. Those who receive money occasionally are generally given between 200 and 500 USD up to five times a year. Those who collect money monthly usually receive between 50 and 100 USD. More than a third of refugees interviewed in Dadaab for a study by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (2011: 28-29) report receiving remittances. While I did not systematically compile data on the matter, I would estimate that among Somali families who have been in Kakuma since the late 1990s, the proportion receiving remittances is higher than that. This impression is corroborated by Oka (2011: 245) who wrote that, according to bankers and traders, 20 percent of the refugee families in the camp receive remittances from Western countries and the Middle East, and 60 percent benefit from money sent by relatives working in other cities in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa.

Oka (2011: 244) has estimated that monthly sales from shops in the camp range from 300,000 to 400,000 USD, while wages and incentives paid in the humanitarian and commercial sectors amount to about 66,000 USD. Thus, he argues, the main source of revenue in Kakuma is not employment but remittances. There are four Somali banks in the camp, linked with global money transfer networks, and they receive between 100,000 and 150,000 USD in international remittances every month (p.245). Remittances from refugees working in Kenya or in neighbouring countries made through the mobile phone-based money transfer service M-Pesa are comparable in volume or even slightly higher (p.244). Interestingly, while remittances from the rest of Kenya and neighbouring countries are at least as abundant as those from further abroad, they do not seem to have the same impact on people's imagination. This may result from refugees' awareness that their relatives working and living in these places face difficult conditions. Indeed, refugees who earn a living in closer locations visit their family and relatives in the camp fairly regularly and, when doing so, are likely to share more about their daily struggles than those who have been resettled further and, in their communications with people in the camp, often present their current situation in a relatively positive light. This probably limits the idealization of the conditions of refugees living irregularly outside the camp by those in Kakuma – although it does not prevent a number of them from leaving the camp to join them.

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[126] While conducting a study for the Danish Refugee Council in 2012, I actually met a few refugees in Kakuma who said they were supporting their families in Somalia by sending small amounts of money that were either a share of remittances they received or of their wage (Grayson et al. 2013: 33).

Remittances have made an important difference to living conditions in the camp, but have also influenced the work of refugees' imagination. It is not only money that is being sent, but also the idea that people in other countries are wealthier and lead more desirable lives. In addition, money transfers have created very strong global bonds through regular contacts and strong networks. Communications have also played a crucial role in structuring people's perception of the world.

2.2 Communication matters: Imagining another world

> I love watching movies because they take me out of Kakuma and connect me to the rest of the world. I like Hollywood movies. You see people who are 16 and driving their car, doing all these things that you cannot imagine in a camp. It is a completely different reality. Seeing what you can't afford can give you hope, force you to accept who you are or make you feel very frustrated.
>
> Aziz

Aziz has never left the camp but can talk of tall buildings in cities, wealthy shopping centres, the comfort of big houses and colourful Indian fashion, thanks to the Bollywood films he enjoys as much as the Hollywood ones. He knows people of his age elsewhere lead lives that have nothing in common with his reality. He considers his life “through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms” (Appadurai 1996: 54) and is well informed about specific details. Once, as I was leaving after spending the afternoon with his family, he told me he wished he could drive me back in a BMW. He had never seen a real one, but had inferred from films that it was a sign of social standing and wealth.

In Kakuma, refugees are in constant contact with people around the globe. Telephone calls, social media, radio and television, as well as newcomers and visitors, constantly bring the world into the camp – and the camp into the world – and give refugees material to picture other places. This continuous interaction with people and ways of life in the West, the Gulf States, South Africa, Nairobi, Dadaab and Somalia makes refugees increasingly mindful of other realities and inequalities and makes the camp even less palatable, as refugees know that elsewhere, people have more comfortable lives, something expressed by Bauman (1998: 23): “If the new extraterritoriality of the elite feels like intoxicating freedom, the territoriality of the rest feels less like home ground, and ever more like prison – all the more humiliating for the obtrusive sight of the others' freedom to move.”

The same awareness makes a return to Somalia difficult to envision. While newcomers to Kakuma bring news from Somalia (usually very negative, given that they have fled), many refugees also speak regularly with relatives who have stayed in the country. Hence they are informed of people’s often difficult living conditions, and the episodes of relative quiet and spikes of violence. A few older refugees say that positive news makes them consider returning, but they are a minority. For most, that is not an option, and news they are getting from all sources consistently corroborates their views, as Dayib points out: “When you watch TV, listen to radio, read on the internet, talk with newcomers or speak with your relatives, there is nothing positive about Somalia. It is all about violence.” Similarly, South Africa is described as a place where one could work but would face xenophobia, a perspective informed by media reports and personal communications with Somalis who have moved there (see footnote 114).

Media reports and communications signal that irregular movements are dangerous and that living irregularly in Europe is not ideal. That knowledge sometimes exacerbates the feeling of being trapped in the camp. Nuradin once shared his thoughts on his (slender) options in the event that he was not resettled. Heading back to Somalia was ruled out and he was not drawn to Nairobi, where he believed refugees faced abuse. He was left with few other choices:

> At the end of the day, what will I do? If I go by boat to Italy, I might die. One of my friends went. He said: "What am I going to do here? Life is so bad." He went to Loki [Lokichoggio, at the Kenya-South Sudan border], then to Sudan. Then you have to deal with the Libyans and the Italians. My friend said he was tortured by the Sudanese, then he was in prison in Libya for two months, finally he left by boat. If the boat sinks, you're dead. There is no way to escape. He was lucky and he reached Italy. But even there, there are a lot of challenges. When it comes to money it is difficult. He is in Palermo. He is hiding. When he sees cops, he runs away. He is surviving with the help of others. He says he wishes he could come back to Kakuma. I decided not to go.

When it comes to the U.S., where most refugees (realistically) believe they have the greatest chance of being resettled, many are mindful of the fact that finding work will be a challenge and that life is expensive. However, the positive aspects outweigh the difficulties. One can move freely and without fear, work legally, go to a proper hospital when sick; no one has to fetch water at the tap or line up for a food ration. It is striking how well informed people are of the differences in conditions faced by refugees in various Western countries, which reflects their ongoing exchanges with people around the world. Many mention they would prefer to go to the U.K. legally, but the odds are small. In the U.K., they believe there are more Muslims and mosques and a better acceptance of their religion. Life in the Netherlands, they say, is very expensive, while Italy is not very welcoming. Canada is easier than the U.S. because of better access to higher education and health care and the availability of more social programmes. However, the country is only accepting small numbers of refugees.

This awareness of other places also impels action and reflection. Regular communications with people in Dadaab makes comparisons between camps possible. In some cases, it motivates refugees to relocate from Dadaab, as work and resettlement opportunities are deemed slightly more favourable in Kakuma. However, it also means that refugees are well informed that incentives are higher in Dadaab than in Kakuma, which exacerbates the irritation of being underpaid. Twenty-six-year-old Fartuun explains the difference by the fact that refugees in Dadaab mobilize when necessary. They have protested to demand higher incentives and are ready to go on strike, something unheard of in Kakuma. She feels that the greater cultural diversity in Kakuma has hindered such collective action. Similarly, when I was in Kakuma, refugees knew that a university campus where refugees would be able to study was opening near the Dadaab camp (see Chonghaile, 15 Oct. 2012).

Not so long ago, a refugee camp might have felt like a very isolated setting where people remained relatively ignorant about global realities. As a result of the work of media, communications and ongoing movements of people, however, Kakuma is now a well-connected site. With relatives spread around the globe, the average Somali in Kakuma is undoubtedly more globally linked than the average Canadian living in a small town. This connectedness has brought a radical change in the way refugees envision their paths, assess their condition and plan their actions, but has also made them increasingly frustrated with their situation. Interestingly, increased knowledge not only makes the camp unacceptable, but also leads people to question social and cultural practices, such as the place of women in society, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Conclusion: Shifting sands

> People are not moving so much now because life is getting hard in Nairobi. The government has asked to refugees to stay in the camps. Whenever a bomb blast occurs in Kenya, people say: "Al-Shabab and Somalis."
>
> Mahdi, 21 years old

Mahdi is referring to the relocation plan, which was justified by the Department of Refugee Affairs by arguing that Somalis are a threat to national security, following grenade attacks in Eastleigh and northeastern Kenya (Chonghaile, 25 Jan. 2013). Movements in Kenya are indeed influenced by the country's political and social landscape. In fact, irregular migration and the obsession with resettlement are a result of exposure to the movements of others, media reports, communications and the very limited opportunities offered by the camp, but also the difficult circumstances that refugees face in Kenya and Somalia's continuing insecurity.

It is possible that if local integration in Kenya were a realistic option, a number of Somalis would consider staying in the country permanently. For the vast majority, however, it is ruled out for politico-historical reasons.[127] This, coupled with the regular blaming of Somali refugees for the country's insecurity, has contributed to people's feeling of being unsettled and has made the status of Somali refugee an undesirable one. Refugees' movements and media reports have increased the camp residents' familiarity not only with the world but also with the socio-political landscape of the country in which they live. The 2013 presidential election, and the 26 days between the elections and confirmation of contested results by the Supreme Court of Kenya, brought palpable tension not only to Kenyans but also to refugees. The matter was a topic of constant discussion, not only because people were interested in the politics of a country where they have spent two decades, but also because they were apprehensive about possible negative consequences on their lives. People spent a lot of time speculating about which candidate seemed more favourable to protecting refugees and thus less inclined to force them to return to Somalia. Rumours were spreading about candidates' supposed views on refugees and Somalis, and extrapolations from previous statements or actions were proliferating. It was in this context that an elderly woman told me people from the host community had come to tell refugees that if they had to go home, Kenyans would appropriate their houses and shops.

The relocation threat had already sent a strong message to refugees. In addition to having a direct impact on movements – many refugees cancelled trips to Nairobi – and on the camp economy, it reinforced refugees' impression of being unwelcome visitors. It made them feel that it was only a matter of time before they would be forced to repatriate to a country that was foreign to many of them. The government had already started claiming that people who had come due to the 2011 drought no longer had any reason to stay in Kenya (see Chap. 2, 1.1.3). The next step, according to the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, would be to conclude that if those who had come in 2011 could return safely, all the other refugees could follow and leave camps where conditions were in any case miserable.

Given that it has existed for more than 20 years, Kakuma feels like a permanent fixture. However, the lives of refugees in such a setting do not have the same fixity. On the one hand, some humanitarian organizations are making five-year strategic plans for their activities in the camp, which necessarily inscribes Kakuma in a long-term perspective. Refugees are establishing businesses, getting married, sending their children to school, improving their homes, all of which make the camp feel less like a transitory place. Yet people keep leaving, movement is a daily reality, pressures for repatriation are mounting and Kenya seems to be becoming less and less benevolent.

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[127] Kenya has clearly and repeatedly stated that Somalis were only visitors and would not become Kenyans. The country has had a difficult relationship with Somalis since its independence and is unlikely to want to see its Somali Kenyan population increase (see footnote 48).

Chapter 7 - They promised us America: A story of deception and mistrust[128]

> If you are punched once, you will feel the pain. Maybe the second time too. But the third time, you will feel it less. You get used to it. We came here hoping to leave within three months. Then we hoped to leave within one year. But we are still here, 17 years later. I don't know what I am hoping for anymore. I don't know what I can hope for.
>
> Aziz, 23 years old

Recounting their arrival in Kakuma in the late 1990s, Somali refugees often maintain that, in order to persuade them to agree to their transfer from the Mombasa camps, UNHCR had assured them that their stay in Kakuma would be brief: they would soon be resettled to the U.S. or Canada. This seemed logical and credible, as resettlement had already started in the Mombasa camps. However, as Aziz points out, this is not what happened. While UNHCR did not officially promise resettlement to refugees who agreed to move to Kakuma, the story is widespread enough that it is difficult to simply discard it as an invention. "The move had to be voluntary," explains Abdikadir. "To convince us, they asked for the assistance of the chairmen of those camps. They were told that if they helped, they would be resettled and so would many families. That is what they told us and that's how we came here." The UNHCR head of operations acknowledges it is possible that, to lure refugees, some staff members implied that resettlement was in the plan, resettlement that did not materialize. In the process, Somali refugees lost confidence in UNHCR, and in the aid system more generally, and it became a common belief that it was in the interest of aid workers to keep refugees in the camps, where the workers would continue to enjoy well-paid jobs.

This initial episode was followed by several breaches of trust: food rations have been regularly cut; refugees are rarely consulted about decisions that have significant impact on their lives and are kept in the dark about budgets and programming; democratically elected leaders are sometimes pushed aside by UNHCR (Jansen 2011: 158); and explanations of the rejection of resettlement cases are frustratingly concise. Refugees meet or hear of aid workers, policemen and government officials asking for money for theoretically free services, or threatening to curtail resettlement processes or fire refugee workers if they do not comply with various demands.

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[128] The title is inspired by Pouligny's *Ils nous avaient promis la paix; Opérations de l'ONU et populations locales* (2004).

In fact, a general climate of suspicion reigns, merely serving to perpetuate mistrust at all levels and between all parties. Refugees are not the only ones who harbour feelings of distrust – in their case, toward the aid organizations. Aid workers also suspect refugees of trying to cheat the system. Mistrust stems mainly from an asymmetrical balance of power between refugees and the aid administration, their opposing goals, and competition between the camp's inhabitants and the host community for limited resources. In addition, experiencing the violent events that resulted in exile, and the exile itself, can affect refugees' capacity and willingness to trust (Daniel and Knudsen 1995: 1-2; Ni Raghallaigh 2014: 89). Mistrust that prompts certain behaviours, justifying strict measures of control, causes further mistrust. This hampers cohesion and cooperation and contributes to an inhospitable atmosphere in the camp. This widespread lack of trust is not specific to Kakuma. In most camps where I have spent time, there were palpable feelings of distrust on both sides, between ruled and rulers.

Although several authors have alluded to the centrality of mistrust in the camp experience, few have specifically studied this question. Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995) and Kibreab (2004) stand out among those who have done so. The first pair paid specific attention to power dynamics among the camp's parties, including refugees, their hosts, aid organizations, the government of the host country and donors. They argue that in the absence of a social contract between refugees and humanitarian organizations or between the various refugee communities, there is no reason for them to trust one another. In fact, "the whole structure of the humanitarian regime is fraught with competition, suspicion and mistrust" (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 217). This mistrust is exacerbated by the incompatibility of the objectives of aid organizations and refugees: while the former wish to maintain their authority, the latter strive to acquire material goods. They authors conclude that the authority of the aid regime relies on an inherent lack of trust and reciprocity. Kibreab studied the lack of moral restraint shown by refugees in their interactions with aid organizations. Acts that would normally be considered immoral or dishonest, such as lying about the size of one's family, registering under more than one identity, pretending to be vulnerable to obtain more assistance, or not repaying loans taken out from aid organizations, become acceptable. This partially explains aid organizations' mistrust toward refugees.

As it will become evident in this chapter, although Voutira and Harrell-Bond's observations were made two decades ago and despite changes to the aid system that have occurred during that period, their reflections remain relevant in the context of Kakuma. The camp continues to be an unfavourable environment for sustained interpersonal and institutional trust, especially from the refugee perspective. And while the long-lasting character of the camp could have gradually induced trust, it has rather contributed to sustaining refugees' mistrust, as experiences from the past reinforce their impression that the aid administration and its representatives are unpredictable.

In the following pages, after defining the notion of trust, I will focus primarily on the distrust that refugees feel for the humanitarian system, but will also devote shorter sections to examining the mistrust of aid organizations toward refugees and the lack of trust within communities and between individuals living in the camp. I will conclude with some thoughts on the effects of mistrust, in the context of the asymmetric power relations between the aid system and the camp's population. Although the host community and the Government of Kenya are part of the web of trust and mistrust, and mistrust is also common between aid organizations competing for the same funding, this chapter focuses on the relationships between the camp's inhabitants and the aid system, which does include some government activities.

1. Defining trust

Giddens (1991 [1996]: 33) defines trust as "confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events, where that confidence expresses a faith in the probity or love of another, or in the correctness of abstract principles." Thus described, trust is relational and relies on the faith that people or institutions will act in a fair and honest manner, respecting the norms and values of a society. Depicted by Simmel (1950: 318) as "one of the most important synthetic forces within society," it is essential to the functioning of societies and the maintenance of cooperation (Möllering 2001: 405; Zucker 1985: 5). While interpersonal trust is established mutually through interaction, trust in abstract systems, such as the humanitarian administration, does not necessarily stem from encounters with representatives of the system who act as "access points" (Giddens 1991 [1996]: 83). Such trust "presumes faith in impersonal principles, which 'answer back' only in a statistical way when they do not deliver the outcomes which the individual seeks" (p.114-15). People's experiences at access points can be seen as "junctions at which trust can be maintained or built up" (p.88) and thus influence people's trust, as does their knowledge of the system, acquired through media reports or other people (p.90). Lack of trust in a person leads to doubting their integrity, while lack of trust in a system usually produces scepticism or a negative attitude towards the system (p.99). Mistrust and trust are not necessarily described as mutually exclusive or antithetical sentiments, but are interlinked. (For a discussion on this topic, see Saunders et al. 2014.) Giddens (1991 [1996]: 100) asserts that the absence of trust leads to "existential angst or dread" rather than to mere mistrust. When speaking of mistrust (a term that I will use more frequently than trust) in the camp, I will be referring to a lack of trust, while bearing in mind that the two sentiments can, to some extent, coexist.

In light of this definition, the camp is infertile ground for developing and maintaining trust. On the one hand, the humanitarian administration gives the impression of taking arbitrary decisions because of its lack of transparency, and thus appears unreliable and unpredictable. Refugees' negative experiences with aid workers, the system's access points, feed into the general mistrust, as does the absence of reciprocity in the asymmetric relationship between refugees and aid organizations. Since refugees are competing for the same resources and may not have developed a sense of belonging to a community that transcends ethnicity, faith in other refugees' integrity is also limited and variable. Moreover, refugees' paths and experience can be inimical to the establishment of trusting relationships. Behnia (1996-97: 48) notes that survivors of war may have become very conscious that other human beings can hurt them and thus should not be easily trusted (p.50). Similarly, refugees' trust in institutions such as the army, the police or the justice system has often been breached in the course of the events that led to exile or during exile (p.54). Finally, aid organizations have little grounds for believing in refugees' honesty, as their goals are impossible to reconcile. While the mistrust is mutual, the consequences of this mistrust are not the same for the two groups, whose political capital is radically different. Humanitarian workers have "certain credentials, political status, and cultural capital." Refugees have "far less political status and power" (Hyndman 2000: xvii).

2. Mistrusting the humanitarian regime

Since Voutira and Harrell-Bond made their observations in 1995, humanitarian organizations have commonly shifted from a needs-based to a rights-based approach[129] (Dufour et al. 2004) and have adopted numerous initiatives aimed at increasing both their accountability towards beneficiaries and beneficiary participation (e.g., Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief [IFRC/ICRC 1994], Sphere Project [1997], Humanitarian Accountability Partnership [2003]). This should have helped to redefine the nature of the relationship between aid organisations and beneficiaries, who are presented as equal rights-holders, rather than passive beneficiaries of international benevolence. In this logic, beneficiaries are expected to participate in the identification of their needs and the design of aid programmes (Armstrong 2008; Harrell-Bond 2002), while aid organisations commit to being transparent. This is meant to nurture trust and reciprocity, as affected populations are actively involved in the administration of aid and can understand the logic of aid programmes.

Yet, in Kakuma, refugees' distrust of the humanitarian system still prevails due to a lack of transparency that gives it an arbitrary and intrusive character, as well as recurring suspicions of corruption on the part of aid workers and at times deleterious relationships between camp workers and refugees. The behaviour of the camp's inhabitants is marked by this distrust, but also by their will to optimize their access to services and assistance. Hence, they adjust their life stories to conform to the perceived expectations of UNHCR, thus reinforcing the distrust of aid organizations. In this section, I will first examine aspects of humanitarian governance that provoke mistrust, namely the lack of transparency that fuels suspicions of corruption, and refugees' impressions that their freedom of speech and participation in decision-making are subject to control. I will then consider how refugees shape their stories.

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[129] The United Nations define human rights-based approaches as "a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights." It specifies that charity "is not enough from a human rights perspective" (OHCHR 2006: 15).

Although UNHCR and NGOs are not homogeneous bodies and particular humanitarian organizations have their own reputations with refugees, there are broad feelings of mistrust for aid organizations in general, as they are governing together. In theory, Kenya is the refugees' host. However, in practice, UNHCR exerts control over the camp, by virtue of funding nearly all activities, including those of the government. Symbolically, it is telling that both the Kenyan and UNHCR flags are raised during international day ceremonies. Refugees are mindful of funding dynamics. The head of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) recalls that when the organization started using a car lent by UNHCR, rather than its own older vehicle, refugees were disappointed. They felt that RCK had compromised its independence and had agreed to be silenced.

2.1 An obscure regime

Refugees' mistrust is closely linked to the question of transparency. They complain that they are infrequently consulted regarding decisions that have profound repercussions on their lives, such as the organization of camp life, the formulation of programmes or the use of funds. For example, refugees have no say in the recurrent cuts to food rations.[130] The reduction of aid and basic services for Sudanese refugees when UNHCR was trying to convince them to return to South Sudan from 2007 to 2009 was also decided without consulting the refugees (see footnote 83). Such events make Somalis fear that they could at some point be pushed to repatriate by the system that is meant to be protecting them. The UNHCR managers sometimes justify decisions by saying that orders came from headquarters or are imposed by funding shortages, leaving no room for refugees' priorities or concerns. Such unilateral (and unpredictable) decision-making can be seen as a breach of trust, especially as the living standards of aid workers remain unaffected. In fact, funding shortages are probably difficult to believe in or accept as an excuse. Given that they receive very little or no information on organizations' budgets and spending, refugees assume that they have infinite resources but choose to distribute aid sparingly to the people they are meant to be helping (Kibreab 2004: 24). It does not escape the attention of refugees that aid workers live and work in luxurious conditions, compared to those of refugees. The UNHCR plan to build a swimming pool for its employees, while refugees' consumption of water is always restricted, was the subject of caustic remarks. Refugees conclude that money is not the problem, but rather its allocation; funds that should have been spent on assisting refugees are instead used for paying good salaries to staff and ensuring their welfare.

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[130] Food rations in Kakuma have been reduced in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2013 (Africa News Service, 26 Feb. 2002; Hathaway 2005: 473; Jansen 2011: 213; Straziuso, 22 Nov. 2013).

According to the camp's constitution, the camp's inhabitants elect representatives who should act as the key interlocutors with the humanitarian governing body. But many hold the opinion that the new leadership system – which they describe as a positive change, in theory – is not truly designed to give them more of a say in decision making (see Chap. 5, 1.2). They believe its aim is to give refugees the impression that they are participating and being consulted, but that in reality their leaders' power is illusory. Interestingly, while the constitution defines in detail the obligations of the refugee representatives, those of the humanitarian administration in terms of consultation, transparency or accountability are not listed. Yet these are part of the commitments taken by UNHCR and most of its humanitarian partners through the adoption of a rights-based approach. However, as Dufour et al. [2004) observe, genuine refugee participation might not be compatible with respecting pre-identified humanitarian priorities. Indeed, standards defining the obligations of aid organizations limit the influence of refugees on establishing humanitarian priorities. Refugees' perception of such a gap between theory and practice works to subvert trust. One of the elected representatives, an Ethiopian who has been in Kakuma for over a decade, summarized his role as an information channel for UNHCR and deplored the fact that only selected information is made available:

> When it comes to funding, we only get a part of the information. For the sake of transparency, we need to know where the money is coming from and where it is going. Then we are somehow involved with the planning when it comes to submitting ideas, but we are not involved with the monitoring and the reporting.

> They are fooling people around with talks of participatory approaches. But who designs the project? Is it participatory? Unless the process changes, block leaders will be seen as useless. We lack a proper link with the agencies. We don't have access to UNHCR and don't have a counterpart.

Another added that if they are too vocal as leaders, national staff and the government threatened them. Yet some do note improvements in the system, affirming that UNHCR is slightly more accessible to leaders than it used to be.

The lack of transparency also fuels refugees' suspicions of corruption among aid workers, especially Kenyans, which is not surprising, given that they make up most of the camp's workers. They are deemed to be untrustworthy and motivated by tribal matters, while foreign workers are seen as more honest, but inaccessible. This makes refugees complain about the lack of oversight in the camp. "[Kenyans] come to the field with no supervisors. They can do anything," laments a Somali woman. "At the food distribution, if there is a visitor, you get a lot of food, but otherwise, they do what they want." Stories of corruption abound. Refugees state that they are routinely asked to pay small amounts, but nonetheless significant in the camp context, to book appointments or get documents. Students assert that teachers ask for money to give them their marks. People also report that even when they hold the necessary travel documents, that does not stop the police from asking for bribes to let them travel within Kenya. Moreover, they are convinced that some pay a high price for their resettlement ticket. "It is a market," exclaims Aden. "Say you need an alien card, you go to [the] DRA and buy it. If you don't pay, you don't get it. It is as simple as that. Money talks here." Such rumours are often regarded as true by refugees, as some have proved to be so over time. The UNHCR resettlement scandal of the late 1990s led to the suspension of resettlement activities; the fraudulent trade of ID cards has been documented and acknowledged by the Kenyan authorities (see Chap. 6, 1.1.1 and 1.2.1). In 2011, an investigation finally showed that refugees were right to accuse aid workers of diverting food, long a subject of complaint by refugee leaders before any serious investigation took place. These occurrences feed refugees' suspicions of aid workers and the government, and lead them to believe corruption-related rumours. Interestingly, corruption does not only create obstacles for refugees. It also means that people with some financial means are able to buy identity documents, travel in the country by bribing their way, import goods and sell them in the camp.

I mentioned to the UNHCR head of protection that people were saying they had to pay for everything, and could buy just about anything as long as they had money, including citizenship or their release from jail. Moreover, the prices they gave for the various services were consistent, which made me think that there was some truth to their claims. He asked if I had any proof, as he could not work on rumours. I did not, as I was not investigating corruption. He said he was only getting anecdotal information and that he lacked first-hand complaints. Nonetheless, he indicated that a police investigation on the issue of false alien cards was ongoing and that a guard and an interpreter had been fired for asking for money from refugees to schedule fictitious appointments for them. He added that it was possible that the delivery of documents was delayed until refugees paid for them.

I do not doubt that he only heard rumours: refugees are reluctant to make reports, as they hold the view that no one can be trusted and that nothing will be done about their complaint. "You will see someone who is corrupt himself," says Abdikadir. "You cannot go and report when you know they are part of the problem. They don't want things to change." It is not only the feeling that their complaints will remain unresolved that prevents refugees from reporting corruption, but also the impression that it could be held against them, in particular because of people's tribal or family loyalties. Axlam, 21, reports that people bringing complaints against their supervisor can be fired, which holds dire consequences, as families need the income. The lack of organizational transparency further mars trust in the value of reporting. Refugees remark on the complaint boxes at the field posts, but say they usually get no response and thus feel they are not worth using.

Mistrust stems not only from the lack of transparency, but also from deleterious relationships with humanitarian staff. Indeed, problems at the points of connection with people representing the system, i.e., aid workers, are frequent and affect trust significantly. Refugees hired by aid organizations are at times fired without proper explanation and dismissive comments are not unusual. Refugees say that those who criticize the humanitarian governance and ask for better conditions compromise their resettlement prospects. "We are being told that we are 'just' refugees" is a common complaint that reflects the asymmetry of the relationship. Such asymmetry also stems from the fact that assistance to refugees is often seen as a form of charity, rather than a right. This leads aid workers to behave as if refugees should simply be grateful for whatever they are given (Harrell-Bond, 2002: 53-55, 69). This dynamic interferes with the moral obligation of seeking reciprocity in giving and receiving, a social process that is also linked with the production of trust (Lammers 2007: 76-77; Simmel 1950: 347-48; Zucker 1985: 10).

2.2 A controlling regime: Silencing refugees' voices

Refugees' feeling that aid workers nurture an unbalanced relationship with them is compounded by the impression that the camp workers attempt to control their speech. They believe that humanitarian organizations try to prevent them from speaking freely to visitors – especially donors, whose visits are strictly controlled and organized. (Refugees spent considerable time gleefully recalling the exceptional visit of the Queen of Qatar, who had apparently refused UNHCR's planning assistance and had focused on listening to what refugees had to say, rather than meeting with officials.) A South Sudanese refugee representative who was enrolled in the journalism class remarked, "People like you don't really understand what is happening here. There are things that are not exposed. When donors come, we are given a speech by the UNHCR national staff. They tell us what to say." Camp residents also believe that humanitarian organizations fear that if refugees engage directly with potential donors, they could become their competitors. Abdikadir, the chairman of Aliform Somali Generation, one of the Somali community youth groups, relates that his organization had secured support from the Somali embassy in the form of manuals for their literacy classes. "When the embassy came to the camp with books, LWF [the Lutheran World Federation] wanted to take them away, claiming that they were the ones in charge of education. Some of our members were threatened. We are perceived as competition by NGOs who are doing business and want to increase their programmes. The way they deal with us is from another era."

Refugees' freedom of speech is not only curtailed when engaging with donors. Jansen (2011: 158) asserts that UNHCR forbade initiatives such as the launch of a Somali radio station. The independent refugee news bulletin *Kanere* reports being censored and blatantly undermined by UNHCR and its partners. Its editor claims that he was fired from his incentive position with LWF because he had criticized the inequality of the refugees' terms of employment. One of its journalists says UNHCR has threatened to close them down and that they are regularly summoned to its office to be told that their reporting is unacceptable: "They want us to only speak of the shortages of food or water, but not of the incentives or the insecurity. They said we should not criticize the agencies. They offered to provide us with offices, but in return, they were to check what we publish. We didn't want that. We have very limited freedom of speech here. Whenever we meet, we fear the police might come. We don't write our names because we fear that we might be arrested or our resettlement cases blocked." While UNHCR deems these accusations excessive, the head of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) finds them realistic. "*Kanere* wrote about corruption in UNHCR. UNHCR had to defend itself. [Employees] tried kicking [the head of the bulletin] out of the camp. They wanted to take him to court. They said he was writing rubbish. He was only writing as things are. They tried to shut him down. Would UNHCR try to close a national newspaper if they wrote something against them?" Shortly after I left the camp, *Kanere* won a significant victory: it finally managed to be registered as an NGO in Kenya, which means that it can operate legally and will, to some extent, more easily dismiss shutdown threats.

In such a context, refugees' ignorance of their rights is somewhat surprising, considering that they would have grounds for requesting changes. While such limited awareness is not peculiar to a refugee context, one could wonder why more efforts have not been made to ensure popular education, since refugees have rights under a very specific legal framework and these rights and their freedoms are being eroded. As I mentioned earlier, none of the journalism students – all in their twenties and most with a full secondary education – knew why they were granted protection as refugees, or why refugees of particular nationalities did not have to undergo individual refugee status determination. They had not even heard of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1969 OUA Convention or the national Refugee Act. Of course, there are exceptions. I met a few refugees who had purposefully learned everything they could about refugee law. Some hold the cynical view that dissemination efforts are limited because ignorance gives more latitude to aid organizations. The head of RCK, who has embarked on teaching refugees international and national law, thinks UNHCR feels threatened by the initiative. "Refugees started realizing that UNHCR should be held accountable and started asking questions. It changes dynamics, as refugees understand that there are rules that UNHCR is meant to follow."

In short, refugees believe the aid system tries to limit their freedom of expression and their access to the outside world. Moreover, humanitarian organizations' lack of transparency means that people can have difficulty making sense of decisions that might seriously affect their lives. Other seemingly discretionary and obscure decisions relate to people's status and future, notably with respect to refugee status determination and resettlement. In the first case, the lengthiness of the process leaves refugees in a sort of limbo and feeds into a general climate of mistrust. In the case of resettlement decisions, refugees are given standardized letters containing general information as to why their cases have been rejected. This might partly explain why refugees shape their life stories to smooth out any apparent discrepancies.

2.3 An obtuse regime: Getting the story right

I knew Abdulaziz, a 20-year-old Ethiopian, fairly well when I sat down with him for a formal interview. We had had regular conversations on this and that, he had showed me films he was working on and I had helped him with an essay he was writing for an application for a film training course in Nairobi, as well as with the narration for a short film he was making. I assume that is why he was willing to disclose more information: we had built a relationship that entailed a degree of reciprocal trust. He asked what I would do with the recording of the interview. I responded that I would use it to type my notes. He wondered if I would broadcast it. I answered that I would not. That is when he inquired whether I wanted to hear the "UNHCR story" or the "real story." He explained:

> When our parents come up with stories for UNHCR, they are not the true ones, because if you tell the truth, you are not resettled. For example, my parents did not come directly to Kenya from Ethiopia. They went to Somalia, as did most of those who fled Ethiopia around 1990-1991. Most people who left during that period were soldiers in the government before it was overthrown. When you come here, you don't say: "I was a soldier," because it automatically leads to rejection for resettlement. Before we came to Kakuma, we were in Marsabit. I heard we had an interview with UNHCR. At that time, my parents were not aware of those things. I think my father told the truth and said he was a soldier. We were rejected. Telling the truth makes your resettlement impossible.

> Here, people got to know things. People would help you come up with the right story, with the right structure, the one that the UN is able to understand, one with a problem that will make the UN resettle you. Most of the guys who do the writing, they chew miraa. So you buy them some, a soda and cigarettes and they do the writing for you. The UN will be happy with the story. If people are here, they have problems. They cannot go back to their country. But they still can't say the truth. Sometimes when I write, I feel I want to tell the truth, but in a way, you might be doing yourself or your family wrong. It becomes scary to tell the truth.

While this was the only time that the motives were aired so candidly, I came to realize that many had an official story that was an amended version of their reality, adapted to what they believed UNHCR wanted to hear. The commonly held view is that one has to be extremely careful with what they reveal to UNHCR, and to the aid system generally, as it cannot understand refugees' complex reality. In addition, people want to avoid alienating the aid system at all costs, so as to maximize their access to assistance and hypothetical resettlement. Illustrations of what refugees see as the institution's obtuseness in the resettlement procedure abound. Ayan talks about how her family was initially rejected because their mother was accused of not being their mother, as she was implausibly young, having been married at 12. Five years later, the family was called back for an interview and this time, the case was approved. Aden says his case was rejected in 2009 because the interviewers believed his marriage to a woman 14 years older than him could not be genuine. Several people mention that in the process, they discovered that people they had always considered as their siblings were in actuality more distant relatives. While UNHCR describes this as attempted fraud, Somalis see no difference between a blood sibling and someone they have treated as such for the whole of their lives.[131] It makes them feel that UNHCR is blind to their social reality. "We were rejected in 2009 because that sister of mine, in reality, she was my mother's sister, but we didn't know," recounts Faarax. "I asked my mother why we were rejected. She said that this girl who we thought was our sister, was in fact her younger sister. I was surprised. That made her my aunt, but I still think of her as my sister. Somalis do that, but it creates problems with resettlement." Deeqa found out that her parents had adopted two of her siblings in a similar way. When asked why they had lied to the interviewers, which led to the rejection of their case, they responded that they had never told their own children about the adoption because they wanted them to simply consider one another as siblings.

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[131] In a book chapter on Somali family reunification in Finland, Hautaniemi (2007) highlights the gap between the way Somalis and Finnish authorities understand who is a family member. While the Finnish definition of family (or the Western definition, for that matter) is usually restricted to a "household," the Somali one is broader and tends to refer to a wider kinship network.

Many end up sharing a carefully reconstructed version of their path, one they believe meets the expectations of UNHCR and prospective receiving countries, and will not make them ineligible for resettlement. Hence, people who were in the military, or who had a parent in the military, in their country of origin will neglect to mention the fact. Sudanese youth might declare dead parents who are in fact alive, but still in South Sudan. Somalis sometimes falsely claim that they belong to a minority clan, as members of minorities are deemed more likely to be recognized as vulnerable and hence resettled. The unpredictability of resettlement, the limited explanations provided on the rejection of cases or on reasons why a case is pending, coupled with the scepticism of interviewers, all fuel the impression that stories have to be crafted. In a number of instances, people told me several months after an interview, after we had spent significant time together, that they wanted to amend what they had initially told me. I assume there were many more cases where the only version of the story I ever heard was the official one, which calls attention to the obvious: mistrust also affects research and relationships between refugees and researchers.

Refugees can go to the field post for resettlement-related claims or questions, but they feel the answers provided are unsatisfactory and that they are given no chance to explain their case. A Somali elder outlines the situation: “There are two field posts for 115,000 refugees. The officers go there three hours once a week. Sometimes they don’t even show up. Now, they started giving appointments. You might wait for three or four months to see someone. When you get to see the officer, you cannot ask more than one question. They say they are too busy. If you insist, the security forces you out.” In reality, the field posts are opened more often than that, but only answer resettlement-related queries once a week. The UNHCR head of protection acknowledges that field posts need to extend their hours in that respect, but objects that refugees’ complaints about being kept in the dark are not always fair: “People should be given the reasons why their case is pending or was rejected. This information is available on the computers. It is true that it does not always happen, but it is also that refugees are not always listening. As it is crowded, answers must be short. If people come with serious questions, we answer, but some are just trying to chitchat. Three minutes is plenty of time to counsel people." A part of the problem might lie in the hastiness of the process. People hope for a detailed explanation, as they sense their future is at stake, but are only given a laconic response, telling them they have lied about their family composition, that there are inconsistencies in their stories or that they have registered under more than one identity. It does not help that refugees sometimes suspect UNHCR of having sold their resettlement slots in the 1990s.

Regardless of the validity of the reasons driving people to fabricate stories, being convinced that one must lie to the system that is meant to be providing one with protection is not benign. It means that one can never be transparent and must always remain on guard. In a study on refugees and asylum seekers in the U.K., Ni Raghallaigh (2014: 94) reflects that while people lie because of mistrust or fears that telling the truth could have negative consequences, this ends up affecting their ability to develop trusting relationships.

Overall, the arbitrary and intrusive character of humanitarian governance impairs refugees' trust and leads to negative attitudes. Moreover, refugees doubt aid workers' integrity, as they suspecting them of being corrupt and of trying to control their speech. The absence of trust towards the system and its representatives can at least partially explain refugees' belief that they must not tell the truth to aid workers. This in turn leads aid organizations to mistrust refugees.

3. From the perspective of aid organizations: A rational mistrust

As I pointed out in the introductory chapter, a paradoxical dualism characterizes the aid regime's perception of refugees. On the one hand, they are seen as powerless victims. On the other hand, they are suspected of trying to cheat the system and regarded as potentially dangerous, a view which bestows on them a capacity to act (Agier 2008: 298; Horst 2006: 93). The former depiction can turn refugees into victims who must be charitably helped, which might explain why refugees are not treated as equals by aid workers, and why their concerns about health or education are at times condescendingly brushed aside or their questions on resettlement are not satisfactorily answered. However, the second representation can contribute to the climate of mistrust and provide justification for measures aimed at controlling refugees. This section uses two examples to explore how the behaviour and the speech of refugees may trigger the mistrust of the aid administration and then examines how such mistrust influences humanitarian governance.

When I was in Kakuma, it was not exceptional for a refugee to hold more than one ration card and to speak openly about it, as people did not seem to think that it was immoral to collect more than their share of assistance. A significant change was planned to take place soon after my departure and was condemned by refugees: the UN World Food Programme was about to introduce biometric controls to prevent refugees from collecting more than one ration, but also to prevent employees from misappropriating food. The agency explained that donors who believed too much food was being diverted were demanding such a change. Aid organizations expected significant repercussions on the camp economy, as food was an important commodity for trade. From the perspective of aid organizations, regardless of the validity of refugees' reasons for cheating, it creates a situation where they are deemed "inherently untrustworthy" (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 219) and justifies ever more sophisticated means of control. This translates into camp management techniques characterized by "a number of surveillance practices through which refugees are continually mapped, marked, and monitored" (Hyndman 2000: 24), attesting to the depth of the mistrust. Thus, in an attempt to impose order on disorder, the aid system codifies, organizes and carefully divides space, and "people become numbers without names" (Harrell-Bond 2000: 1). Such descriptions evoke Foucault's analysis (1993) on space and discipline: "la discipline parfois exige la *clôture*" (p.143), or a closed place, but may also work "l'espace d'une manière beaucoup plus souple et plus fine. Et d'abord selon le principe de la localisation élémentaire ou du *quadrillage.* A chaque individu, sa place; et en chaque emplacement, un individu." (p.144) Techniques of control have evolved over time, reflecting a change in the norms and values governing the administration of aid. While it was considered acceptable to conduct refugee registration and verification without prior notice to prevent groups from manipulating the numbers, this is no longer the case. Inhabitants of the camp could be rounded up by surprise, at night, and marked with indelible ink (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 219). The coercive nature of such an approach has been strongly criticized and UNHCR's latest manual on registration (2003) insists on the importance of consulting and informing populations. (However, as a UNHCR employee a decade ago, I witnessed registration planning that still entailed catching the population by surprise at sunrise.)

The perception that refugees are untrustworthy also contributes to their spoken word being ignored, as Fassin (2011: 87-88) observes is the case with asylum seekers in France. In Kakuma, this translates into a sometimes disquieting scepticism on the part of aid workers regarding refugees' accounts of corruption, violence or sexual harassment. My being white and ready to listen often led to refugees' bringing me to meet people who had just been attacked or had a particularly critical problem, even though I kept repeating that I was powerless, and thus did not want to give people the impression that I could be of any help. They still believed that I enjoyed easier access than they did to UNHCR and that I was likely to speak of the incident. I did have access to UNHCR – paradoxically, given that I was not part of the agency's population of concern – but what it allowed me to see was that UNHCR received reports of corruption, sexual abuse or violence with suspicion. In one case, I mentioned to the head of operations that I had just met with the husband of a woman who, he recounted, had been taken to hospital after being raped when their house came under attack during the night. There were bullet holes in the wall to attest that something had indeed happened. His first reaction was one of deep mistrust for refugees' "stories," as he believed these were too often made up for resettlement purposes or, sometimes, to explain pregnancies outside marriage. His doubts were understandable: refugees do craft stories, which complicate matters as aid organizations try to distinguish between fabricated accounts and true ones. The head of the gender unit of the Lutheran World Federation estimates that only half the reports on gender-based violence made to her office are true. She considers the other half to be motivated by resettlement ambitions. Still, the methods used to assess the veracity of a story seem rather haphazard and it is possible that in some cases, real incidents are deemed to be untrue, while the opposite probably also happens with false stories. (For more on insecurity and vulnerability claims related to resettlement, see Jansen 2008.)

3.1 Dealing with irreconcilable goals

The scepticism of the aid administration stems, at least in part, from its knowledge of strategies used by refugees to optimize their access to assistance or resettlement, strategies that the aid system is trying to curtail. In this case, the objectives of refugees differ radically from those of aid organizations, as do more broadly the kinds of behaviours that are deemed acceptable.

Kibreab's (2004) observations on the relatively taboo subject of prevalent refugee cheating in camps in the Horn of Africa – some refugees provide false information about themselves or their families to gain more food, or tell untrue stories or lie about their health or vulnerability – open an interesting line of thought. He tries to understand why refugees apply different moral codes depending on whether they are engaging with aid organizations or other refugees. He contends that refugees have a "propensity to behave in a morally unrestrained manner in their interaction with aid agencies," and thus feel no sense of guilt for behaviour that would normally be considered unacceptable (p.1). In fact, in the camp, such behaviour is laudable: "Those who succeeded in cheating aid agencies by presenting false stories (or misrepresenting themselves) were often regarded with respect and admiration by their neighbours and kin" (p.11). Yet the same act committed within refugee communities and "disregarding the interest of a relative, a neighbour or a villager is considered to be disgraceful and inappropriate behaviour" (p.1). He argues that cheating and misrepresentation have not come to be considered as appropriate because refugees "have undergone some kind of moral decay": this is borne out by the high moral standards that prevail within communities (p.11). Kibreab asserts that tight social ties binding individuals to a code of honour cease to be relevant when refugees interact with faceless entities such as aid organizations and governments. This is especially true as individuals share no long-term interest with those institutions, making the principle of reciprocity meaningless (p.17, 24). In such a context, "taking UNHCR, NGOs and host governments 'for a ride' [is] not considered immoral. On the contrary, it [is] considered heroic. Outmanoeuvring the rich and powerful organizations . . . [is] seen as a valiant act" (p.18). Kibreab believes that another reason why moral codes are not upheld is because the rules and norms that regulate aid organizations may be alien and incomprehensible, and thus share little with the "informal institutional rules which generally regulate access to, control over and use of resources among the refugees" (p.24). The fact that those who manage aid share little with refugees in terms of ethnicity and religion – and the dearth of information on how humanitarian organizations raise and manage their funds – also seem to come into play (p.24). Kibreab reflects that refugees' cheating could also be understood "as being acts of defiance against the vague and often subjective criteria used by aid agencies to divide people into separate categories, e.g., vulnerable (deserving), non-vulnerable (non-deserving), internally displaced persons, local residents, refugees and returnees" (p.18). Given their belief that aid organizations have access to unlimited resources, refugees do not see collecting more than one's share as an especially reproachable act, but rather as a rational one, even though humanitarian organizations do not share such a view.

In such a context, it is difficult to envisage how trust can be established with refugees or how they can truly participate in the design of programmes or in the management and distribution of aid. In considering again Giddens' definition of trust, the reasons for the mistrust felt by aid organizations and their workers towards refugees converge. Indeed, nothing indicates that refugees will act in a fair and honest manner in their interaction with the system and its administrators. The camp becomes the locus of tensions between control and circumvention, and between its inhabitants and its humanitarian government. Within the camp, although there is more evidence of trust, interpersonal mistrust is relatively common, as is mistrust between coexisting ethnic groups.

4. Mistrust in the community

After an initial period of adjustment, "most of the internal relations within the refugee communities are characterized by mutual trust, respect and cooperation," writes Kibreab (2004: 13). "When the refugees interact with each other, they often act according to some moral principle that requires them to take account of each other's interest . . . mainly due to the principle of expected reciprocity." From Kibreab's perspective, refugees feel a moral obligation towards fellow refugees, and thus have entered into a social contract. At the other end of the spectrum, I previously mentioned (Chap. 5, 1.2.2) Voutira and Harrell-Bond's (1995: 218) assertion that "one seldom finds a sense of political solidarity among refugee populations. . . . The power of the humanitarian regime over limited supplies generates inter and intragroup conflict, as individuals seek to ingratiate themselves with the authorities in competition with their fellows. . . . Such conditions seriously undermine any potential for unity and solidarity of the population as a whole while at the same time introducing new grounds for cleavages and factions." I believe that the reality in Kakuma lies somewhere between these two positions. While community and personal trust are at times lacking and are challenged by the competition for resources, they do nonetheless exist. Testimonies of trust are visible in the way people coexist, interact and cooperate, as well as in details of daily life, such as the credit granted to customers by shop owners or people's mutual lending of objects and money.

I have previously indicated that with time, communities did form in the camp and this entailed some trust, trust being central to the reconstruction of communities (Chap. 3). I have also noted that people have learned to live relatively peacefully together (Chap. 5). Yet trust does not prevail between the various communities coexisting in the camp. Distrust is obvious in the stereotypical views that refugees commonly express about refugees of other ethnicities or nationalities, which I have highlighted in Chapter 5. For example, it is said of Somalis that they "only believe in money," "have problems with everyone," "are used to bribing" and "don't even cooperate within their community." This is not surprising, as refugees do not feel that they belong to one large community of Kakumians, but rather to a specific community within the camp, even though a broader sense of solidarity is perceptible at times. Even members of the same nationality, clan or tribe do not necessarily trust one another at a personal and group level.

4.1 Trust in a land of scarcity

Evident mistrust between individuals and between groups within communities is not specific to Kakuma. It exists in almost any setting, but the lack of confidence in this context can be accentuated by people's previous experiences. At a group level, Somalis fairly often criticize minority groups for using their ethnicity for resettlement purposes, while people from minority groups accuse those from majority groups of instigating the Somali conflict. In that respect, trust is limited. Similarly, trusting relationships are not the norm between community organizations competing for funding and recognition. This translates into unflattering remarks and limited collaboration between such groups. For example, the oldest Somali youth group, the Somali Youth League (SYL), has a fairly tense relationship with the two more recent associations, Aliform Somali Generation and the Union of Somali Youth. It accuses them of being tribal and interested only in money, which seems unfair: while the SYL initially received money from UNHCR, neither of the newer groups has secured funding. In the case of Aliform, volunteers are actually contributing 200 KSh a month.

At a personal level, refugees are often suspicious of one another. Several say that they reveal as little as possible about themselves to others, as they fear that any such information might be used against them, and that other refugees might try stealing their resettlement slot. When we talked of trust and security in the journalism class, many brought up suspicions that intelligence services from their countries of origin were operating in the camp. As a result, they believed that prudence was required at all times and that whatever they shared had to first be carefully filtered. Stories are commonly adapted for resettlement or assistance purposes, but also, in some cases, for the sake of protection. When I asked the smart and resourceful 23-year-old Zahra why she had not applied for a scholarship with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), given that she had had good grades in high school and wanted to pursue her education, she responded that it could cause her problems. Her story is the most extreme that I heard, as it not only entailed making up a story for UNHCR, but also changing her identity in everyday life:

- Zahra: Sometimes, as a refugee, you have to mix things up. You know, the names I am using, they are not my real names. The names I have on my school documents are not the ones they have in UNHCR. If I applied for a scholarship, they could see that I lied and I could be arrested. That means that I cannot use my documents.
- Me: Why did you change your name?
- Zahra: When my sister died [the person who had raised Zahra on the Kenyan coast, as both her parents died when she was young], life became difficult. I could not find money for food, I could not pay for school fees. So I decided to go and find my grandmother in Kismayo, back in Somalia. When I arrived, my family decided to find me a man. In our culture, at 13, you are meant to be getting married. I was 14. I got mad and decided that it would not happen. I had to get out of there. I went back to Malindi [on the Kenyan coast]. I just wanted to go back to school. I was in Form 2 and I was planning to have a very good

future. I was not thinking of going to the camp. I found a family who accepted to host me and send me to school if I worked for them. After high school, life became difficult. I met a sheikh who advised me to go to Kakuma. I did not want to, but I had no choice. I wanted to go to college, but I had no money and I could not get a job. When I arrived in the camp, I decided to register as someone else. I knew my grandmother was looking for me. If I used my real name in the camp, maybe there would be some people who knew people in Kismayo who would tell my grandmother I was here. The family could come looking for me. That is when I changed my name.

- Me: Why don't you go to UNHCR to explain the situation and ask for your name to be changed in your documents? You would not have to use your real name in the camp, but it would allow you to apply to the WUSC.
- Zahra: I cannot do that. It is a very long process and they start suspecting that you are lying. I had a friend who was nearly arrested because they said she had changed her name. It was not even true. It happened because she had applied to the WUSC.
- Me: Don't you think you would be able to explain your situation to UNHCR?
- Zahra: Meeting with [the head of UNHCR's protection unit] is very difficult and I don't trust the national staff. They can make problems for you. I just want to avoid trouble. I have been going through a lot of shit and don't want more to happen.

Zahra's attitude and words starkly underline the consequences of the significant breaches of trust experienced by a number of refugees. She is consistently on her guard and never wants to talk of anything remotely personal in a public space because she fears other people might be listening. She says she has no friends in the camp. "There is no one I can tell everything to here. People are not trustworthy. Everyone is after something. No one wants you to succeed before them, they will try to create problems for you if you are being resettled. They could go to UNHCR and tell that I am not using my real names, for example. There are people I say 'Hi' to, but I don't tell them who I really am. It has become difficult for me to open up and talk."

Rumours about refugees, spread by other refugees, abound. Most often, they are related to resettlement, which is probably the issue generating the most mistrust and suspicion between refugees. Several accuse others of not being bona fide refugees, but rather Kenyans who have registered as refugees to try to benefit from resettlement. A number of people hold that some youths have been falsely accused of rape by girls whose families are hoping to be accepted for resettlement on account of lack of protection in the camp. Emmanuel, a 26-year-old South Sudanese, once asked if I wanted to know the truth about his regular trips to Lodwar, the largest town in northwestern Kenya, a hundred kilometres away from Kakuma. We had travelled together on one occasion and he had said he was visiting a friend. He might have felt bad for lying, because we often spent time talking of our respective paths and countries and comparing notes on the camp. His Kafkaesque story went like this: One day, when he was on his way home after work, people from his community warned him that the police were looking for him. Given their reputation, he was scared and decided to return to the office of the NGO where he worked. His supervisor advised him to go to the police station and inquire why they were looking for him. He was informed that he was accused of raping a girl. When the girl was asked to describe the event, she backtracked. He was told that the accusation was dropped and that he could go home. Yet, a week later, the police came back to take him to jail. The girl's statement had changed from rape to assault and he was notified that he would be taken to court. However, the girl never came to testify. He kept repeating that he had done nothing, but he was told to stop being stubborn. He was found guilty but was released. A few months later, he was arrested again and told it was because he was refusing to admit his guilt. This time, he was taken to Lodwar. There again, the girl never came to testify and there were no witnesses. He was however declared guilty again. By the time he shared that story with me, the case was closed, but he was still on probation, which is why he had to report regularly to the police in Lodwar. His innocence was supported by both the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, who had found the case to be lacking evidence. He believed the accusation was motivated by hopes for resettlement. The girl involved in the case was married to a South Sudanese who had been resettled to the U.S., but had not managed to take her along. Emmanuel claimed that the husband was trying to find a way for his wife to join him in the U.S. He had sent e-mails to a number of staff members of LWF saying his wife was at risk in the camp and needed to leave, and asking for Emmanuel to be jailed. Emmanuel was convinced that the man had bribed the policemen. He mentioned several similar cases that he regarded as false and linked to resettlement hopes. I was in no position to judge the truth of his story, but it does highlight the degree of mistrust between refugees stemming from competition for resettlement opportunities.

In other cases, people accuse fellow refugees of fabricating stories about them to hinder their resettlement prospects. For example, the family of 24-year-old Abdullahi was transferred by UNHCR and IOM from Dadaab in 2002 to be part of the group resettlement of Somali Bantus to the U.S. Most departed for America in the following years. Abdullahi's family was rejected from the process for lying to the interviewers. He is convinced that their case was in fact rejected because of strained social relations. His sister had refused to marry the secretary-general of the camp's Somali Bantus. Snubbed, he may well have handed a report to the resettlement officers declaring that their mother was not their real mother. "Americans believed him because he was the secretary-general. So anything he said was considered true. When we went to our appointment, the person conducting the interview said: 'This is not your mom.' [The interviewer] claimed we had agreed to take her to America because she was giving us money. It was a lie, but we were rejected." The tensions and distrust surrounding resettlement are such that refugees involved in the process as interpreters for UNHCR, and especially for IOM, are sometimes accused of spearheading the rejection of cases.

Although there are definitely more testimonies of trust between refugees and within refugee communities, distrust between the various communities and individuals is also manifest. This hampers the emergence of a community transcending ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, limits cohesion within ethnic groups. Persistent movements that lead to constant changes in the camp's population are also unconducive to the development of trusting and lasting relationships. Nonetheless, it is considered dishonourable to behave dishonestly in interactions with other refugees. While communities and individuals may not fully trust one another, their compliance with moral standards indicates that a social contract is respected, at least to some extent. This could explain why people commonly point the finger at the host community or policemen, rather than at fellow refugees, for the petty crimes committed in the camp.

Conclusion: In the land of mistrust

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how trust broke down early in the process of the settlement of Somalis in Kakuma and was never restored, the camp's environment being intrinsically unfavourable to the establishment of trusting relationships. As a result, cooperation between refugees and the humanitarian system remains limited. Trust as defined by Giddens (1991 [1996]) is based on the confidence that a person or a system is reliable or honest, which in turn gives individuals a feeling of security. In the absence of trust, which requires some transparency so that decisions can be predictable and intelligible, refugees nurture a negative attitude towards the aid system and doubt the integrity of its staff. This reinforces their scepticism regarding the probity of the system. Breakdowns in trust that occurred many years ago, such as the resettlement fraud of the 1990s, have long-term repercussions. In that sense, the long-term existence of the camp has not fostered trusting relationships. Indeed, while a complex and incremental process is required to building trust, it is relatively easy to destroy and is then longer and harder to restore than initially (Hynes 2009: 98; Saunders and Thornhill 2004: 496). Refugees' behaviour and mistrust fuel those of aid workers and organizations who in turn doubt the honesty of refugees, whom they suspect of attempting to cheat to accrue resources and to play a role that might allow them to improve their condition. Although dynamics at a camp level between refugee communities and among individuals entail more trust, suspicion remains high. This may be partly explained by the competition for limited resources and the lack of a united community, as well as by people's past experiences that may have affected their willingness and ability to trust.

While mistrust is palpable at all levels, its consequences are not the same for everyone, because of unequal power relations and influence. Aid organizations, whose decisions have a major impact on refugees' lives, have access to important means of control. In contrast, refugees have only limited influence on these organizations, which are usually held accountable to donors rather than refugees. The relationship between humanitarian organizations and refugees is thus characterized by an absence of reciprocity and a power imbalance. This dynamic limits the opportunities for cooperation between refugees and aid organizations, which, in turn, accentuates the mistrust of all parties, as well as the camp's inhospitality.

These observations show that Voutira and Harrell-Bond's (1995) remarks remain relevant, despite efforts to redefine the relationship between refugees and aid organizations, notably through the adoption of rights-based approaches. In the absence of a shared moral configuration, which becomes evident throughout this chapter, this relationship cannot truly be trustful and reciprocal. As Giddens writes, trust entails the confidence that people or institutions will act in a fair and honest manner. The notions of fairness and honesty rely on a shared system of norms and moral values. In this context, it might be relevant to ask how trust could prevail. In that sense, while I chose to revisit Voutira and Harrell Bond's writings, it would be interesting to study the moral economy of the camp (or, in fact, its moral economies). Such an approach would require situating norms and values in their historical and social contexts (Fassin 2009: 1257). The example of refugees' stories is evocative. Through their accounts, refugees notably wish to present themselves as a "sujet acceptable" (Meintel 1990: 58) and be recognized as refugees, but also to ensure their access to assistance and prospective resettlement, even if it entails polishing their account. Assistance and resettlement allow refugees to meet their moral obligations towards their family who, in the first case, can live in better conditions and, in the second, can aspire to a "normal" life, and towards their relatives, through sharing their comparative wealth with them. Humanitarian organizations, on the other hand, try to prevent what they perceive as fraudulent acts and, in doing so, tend to discredit refugees' stories. In this way, they fulfil their moral obligations towards donors. In such a case, the moral configurations underlying the behaviours of refugees and of aid organizations differ considerably. Of course, this example would need to be further developed to give a full account of the complexity of the social worlds of the camp. It is likely that divergences between moral economies create mistrust.

In any case, mistrust and asymmetrical power relations work to turn the camp into a setting where refugees feel constrained and are constantly on their guard, and consequently not a place where they can envision their future. Trust and mistrust are intimately linked with the way people are represented. These representations are the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter 8 – Through their eyes: Representation and self-representation

> To be a refugee means that you are ruled by somebody, you don't have the freedom that you had in your own country. When you want to travel outside of Kakuma, you must take permission from UNHCR. It creates a bad picture. It's not good to be a refugee. It's not comfortable.
>
> Fatuma, 19 years old

I asked my photography students and several other young people to define what a refugee was and explain how they felt about being one. Their responses were surprisingly similar. In theory, a refugee was someone who had fled from his or her country. In practice, they described refugees as people with no rights who were perpetually reminded that the land they lived on was not theirs. Refugees, they said, were held in contempt and treated as lesser human beings. While they strongly recognized and felt the limitations imposed by their condition, they did not accept them nor did they feel inferior to others. In fact, they stressed that facing the camp and exile was an experience that had forced them to be brave and strong so as to manage in a foreign environment and acquire new skills and knowledge. I came to notice that most youth never used the words "refugee" or "camp" in speaking of themselves or where they grew up. Being a refugee in a camp is not a defining characteristic that they emphasize, possibly because of its stigmatizing connotation. The gap between the way they believe they are perceived – as powerless victims in need of help – and how they speak of themselves is vast and they are well aware of the chasm. This came across clearly in the student's family and self-portrait exercises: their textual and photographic representations did not exude wretchedness and poverty. For the occasion, the students did exactly what one would expect from people having their portrait taken: they picked the finest settings and tried to look their best in front of the camera.

The first two pictures shown are portraits of their families by two photography students, Nafissa and Hussein. I took the third and fourth pictures, for a self-portrait exercise in which students wrote a text about themselves and decided how they wanted to be photographed.

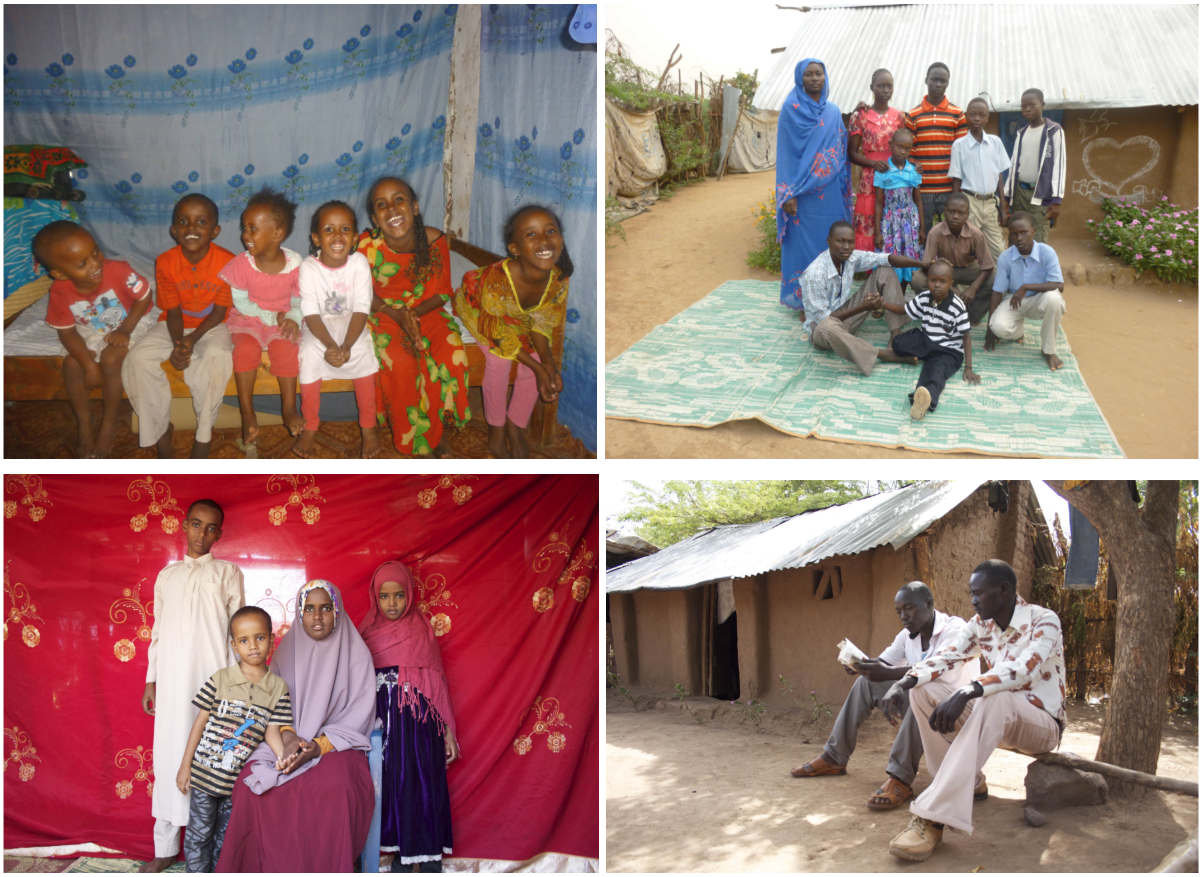

Figure 14: Family photographs and self-portraits.

Nafissa's siblings are smiling and laughing. Hussein's family members are wearing their best attire and proudly posing in front of their well-kept home. For her self-portrait, for which she wanted to pose with her siblings, Suad carefully chose a spot with her mother and they covered the wall with elegant red fabric for the occasion. Yohana decided to be piously reading the Bible in his brother's company in front of their home.

The following pictures of refugees in Chad and Kenya were used by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and UNHCR to illustrate reports and news stories (IFRC 2007: 14; UNHCR 2011d). In both cases, they were accompanied by non-specific captions that do not mention people's names, where exactly they are from, why they are there or why they look distraught.

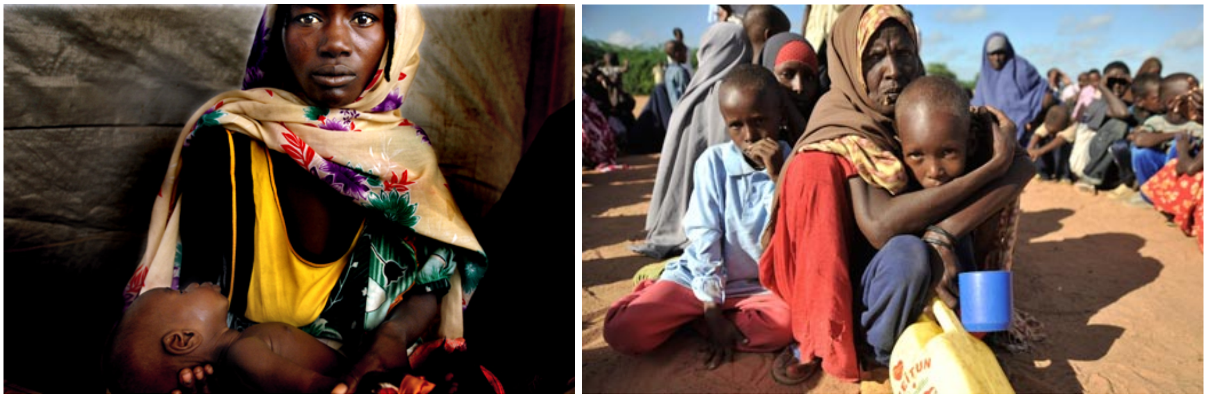

Figure 15: Refugee photographs by aid organizations.
Courtesy IFRC/D. Cima; UNHCR/R. Gangale.

These photographs seem to epitomize the gap between the typical imagery of refugees as undifferentiated and depoliticized victims and people's self-representation as unique and capable human beings (see Berger 1980: 40). Although the "refugee" category designates people with extremely diverse stories and backgrounds who might have in common only their flight across an international border, "the refugee" has become a universal figure to which is attached a quasi-generic image of misery and suffering (Horst 2006: 12-14; Hyndman 2004: 200; Malkki 1995a: 510-11). This not only obscures people's multi-dimensionality but also their agency (Rajaram 2002: 251). Stripped of citizenship, the refugee ideal type is the very image of bare life (Agamben 1998: 171; Arendt 1951 [1968]: 300; Malkki 1995: 11; Nyers 2006: 16-17, 61).

Such a representation may influence the prevalent perception of refugees and the way they are treated by aid organizations (Clark-Kazak 2009: 319; Horst 2006: 93), but how does it affect refugees' self-representation and perception of their own capacities? To what extent does having to conform to stereotypes for assistance purposes end up shaping self-representation (Zetter 1991: 45)? Is it transformed by living in a poor and stigmatized setting where opportunities are scarce (Bourdieu 1993: 167)?

This chapter is about the way young refugees are represented and how it alters their self-perception. While the focus is on Somalis, comments by other refugees are also included as, regardless of their nationality, their observations are noticeably similar and consistent. This is a significant matter, because people's self-representation is related to their assessment of their own capacities and their belief in their ability to shape their lives. Interestingly, refugee youth occupy two potentially stigmatizing social positions. In addition to being refugees, they are youth, a category commonly perceived as problem-prone. I argue that although young people are conscious of the way they are represented, they do not accept the common view as accurate but do in fact object to it. Such resistance forces them to define who they are, marking their distance from outsiders' expectations and perception. While one cannot help but wonder to what extent this representation insidiously alters their image of themselves, I dispute the claim that it produces a uniformly debilitating effect. Malkki (1995) has convincingly shown that displacement and being a refugee have a significant influence on the production of sense and self-representation, but these do not necessarily tally with stereotypical images of the displaced.

In this chapter, I will first examine the common representation of refugees and the perspective of aid workers. I will discuss how youth believe they are represented and conclude with a section on youth's self-representation. I favour the words "representation" and "perception" over "identity" as they seem to convey more tangibly the connection to a social setting and socialization, and suggest a subjective self-appraisal formed notably through interaction and in response to social expectations (Kaufmann 2006: 42, 49, 65, 71).

1. The way they look at us

> The word 'refugee' has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance.
>
> Edward Said 1984 [1994]: 144

Although it has been widely remarked that refugees are routinely depicted as powerless and voiceless victims, there is no fixed and uniform representation of refugees. Media portrayals and public reports by aid organizations are often much more simplistic and prone to subsuming refugees to their misery than are aid workers directly involved with refugees, or, obviously, refugees themselves. In this section, I will outline the generic representation of refugees, before exploring the views of aid workers. I will touch upon the perspective of parents and community members on refugee youth, but only briefly, as their focus on cultural change brings us back to cultural change and preservation, a theme already developed in Chapter 5.

1.1 Human beings "in the raw": Representing refugees

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Hannah Arendt observed the reduction of refugees to their state of bare life and their exclusion from the political sphere. She wrote that refugees, stripped of their belonging to a community and denied the exercise of their citizenship, lose not only their national rights but more importantly, their human rights, which are in theory inalienable. They become "rightless, the scum of the earth" (Arendt 1951 [1968]: 267). "The prolongation of their lives is due to charity and not to right, for no law exists which could force the nations to feed them; their freedom of movement, if they have it at all, gives them no right to residence which even the jailed criminal enjoys as a matter of course; and their freedom of opinion is a fool's freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow" (p.296). Such complete dispossession is tantamount to "the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective" (p.296). Refugees are thus excluded from the human race, from the family of nations: "It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man" (p.300). The legal definition of a refugee in the 1951 Convention, argues Nyers (2006: 61), assumes their state of nature by defining them as driven by their survival instinct rather than by reason. Consequently, refugees cannot "act politically, develop knowledge, or otherwise pursue a cultured form of existence."

Because of this perception, certain behaviours, characteristics and attitudes are socially expected of "authentic" refugees, who only exist in opposition to the norm embodied by citizens (Nyers 2006: 9). As victims devoid of speech and political subjectivity, who depend on charity rather than law, refugees are regarded as helpless and passive, ignorant of their history, their traditions, their culture (Malkki 1995a: 496-498; 1995: 8-12; Nyers 2006: xv, 16-

18; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995: 211).[132] Reduced to their biological status, refugees become a homogeneous population, usually represented in traditional gender, social and age roles (Clark-Kazak 2009: 319). Stereotypically, girls and women in camps are depicted as “feeble, vulnerable, gentle, kind and peace-loving,” while men are “strong, resistant, heartless, and callous” (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 123-124). Refugees’ sole hope is to return to their country of origin, “so as to restore the conditions under which they may once again enjoy a properly human life as citizens” (Nyers 2006: 23). This representation implies that as soon as someone crosses an international border, he or she is dislocated, at a loss, a “native gone amok” because of uprooting (Malkki 1992: 34). Sedentariness is hence the only norm: the only place where human beings can live in harmony with their culture and identity is their country of origin (Malkki 1995a: 508-509; Nyers 2006: 16; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 335). “Almost like an essentialized anthropological ‘tribe,’ refugees thus become not just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status; they become ‘a culture,’ ‘an identity,’ ‘a social world,’ or ‘a community.’ There is a tendency, then, to proceed as if refugees all shared a common condition or nature” (Malkki, 1995a: 511).[133]

This representation – and the term itself is important, as this portrayal does not correspond to reality – conceals the specificity of individual experience and people’s agency. People become bodies that must be managed, rather than full and complex human beings. This has an impact on how refugees are perceived by humanitarian organizations and their staff, which in turn influences interactions and programming.

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[132] Nyers (2006: 98) points out that refugee warriors defy “the traditional characteristics associated with refugeeness. Instead of being passive, there refugees take action. In place of voicelessness, they have clear objectives and demands. In defiance to the ‘humanitarian and nonpolitical’ terms that define their status, they are unmistakably political actors engaged in the deployment of violence for political ends.” They are seen as an anomaly, as “failed” refugees (p.102).

[133] This brings to mind Farah’s account of a conversation with a Somali in Sweden (2000: 190): “For, apropos my own admonition, he asked if I realized that ‘we were not Somalis when we were in Somalia.’ ‘How do you mean?’ I asked. ‘Because we did not tend to divide ourselves into smaller units, each of us locating our identities in one or another of the clan families? I was a member of this family, you were probably a member of another, and so on!’ ‘And in Sweden?’ ‘Here, we are refugees first, black Africans second and Somalis last.’” Loizos (1981: 182-183) reports very similar comments from Cypriot refugees.

1.2 Victims or dangerous outcasts

Like many refugees, the Kenyan head of FilmAid in Kakuma refused to employ the word "refugee." I asked why, pointing out that in this context it referred to a legal status and was not in itself a derogatory term. "I don't like using it because of how it is used by people around here. They don't use it to refer to a legal status but to sub-humans. Over time, I realized that these guys [refugees] expected to be treated as inferiors because that is how they have been treated for so long. They are blamed for being here. I don't think humanitarian workers understand why they came here. I have met amazing colleagues here but also others who make comments that drive me crazy. 'Refugee' has a bad meaning here. That is why I avoid using it."

I have already mentioned that aid organizations portray refugees in conflicting ways. They are seen both as victims deprived of agency and as dishonest strategists, hence necessarily possessing agency (Horst 2006: 93). The representation of refugees as victims might account for the asymmetry in the relationship between aid workers and refugees, something I underscored in the previous chapter. It would be wrong to presume from these observations that all aid workers have an inhumane relationship with refugees. Some do, many do not. It is the management techniques that dehumanize refugees. These are influenced by the way refugees are represented, but also by the fact that their rights on Kenyan soil are limited in practice. The discourse of the Kenyan staff often carries more prejudice than that of the internationals, possibly because the latter spend less time in the camp directly engaging with refugees and have adopted a more proper style of speech. But in all cases, what is considered an acceptable standard for refugees would not be acceptable for most aid workers and their families: severe overcrowding in school, lack of access to decent health care, whipping of those who do not stay in line during food distributions, insecurity, arbitrariness or unpredictable cuts in assistance. Aid workers' acceptance of these standards suggests that refugees are not represented as fellow humans but as recipients of charity who can be expected to be grateful.

The widespread adoption of human rights-based approaches since the early 2000s by humanitarian organizations could have led to a shift in representations. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, these approaches were meant to transform beneficiary-victims into rights-bearers and thus transfigure the charitable relationship into one between rights-bearers. However, Armstrong (2008) claims that in practice, the change did not occur. "For the majority of the camp population, human rights only translates in so far as there exists an understanding that a demonstration of sufficient suffering may bring about some international interest and with it perhaps some positive change. It would be difficult to argue that this is a direct result of the adoption of a rights-based approach . . . however, it does seem clear that current practices have done nothing to undermine previous representations and have indeed reinforced them by making suffering the most powerful tool of the displaced in their interface with international workers" (p.5). Not all refugees correspond to the victim stereotype, however, which leads to contrasting representations in Kakuma. Indeed, unlike Sudanese, Somalis are often depicted as "bad" refugees by aid workers, seemingly because of their refusal to conform to the representation of refugees as victims.[134] They refuse to work for a miserable salary, are vocally ungrateful for meagre assistance and have no respect for authority based purely on one's ranking (as pointed out by the Somali historian A. A. Hersi, quoted by Lewis [2004: 493] and by Laitin [1977: 29]). Remarkably, the traits that make Somalis "bad" refugees are qualities they are proud of.

The dual representation of refugees as victims and as threatening and untrustworthy outcasts seems encapsulated in the fact that the camp is a no-go zone after dark for aid workers and visitors. The justification for this interdiction is twofold. First, the camp is depicted as dangerous, refugees being dangerous. Then, aid workers should not have intimate relationships with refugees, because of their assumed vulnerability. Indeed, scandals of sexual exploitation by humanitarian workers have led to policies aimed at preventing sexual abuse and strongly discouraging sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries, as these are based on "inherently unequal power dynamics" (SG 2003: 2; Levine and Bowden 2002).[135] As a side effect, social relations between aid workers and refugees have come to be closely scrutinized and often restricted. A young foreign aid worker pointed out that while these policies are justified, as they seek to prevent abuses, they also create a separate category of people with whom one cannot establish an equal relationship, since all are considered to be vulnerable, and thus any relationship would be abusive. "Back home," she said, "these are people I could have an intimate relationship with. I strongly connect with some. Here, the premise is that such a relationship would be exploitative." This boundary carries a strong symbolism, separating the realm of citizens from that of "untouchable" refugees and tainting the dynamics of socialization.

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[134] In *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora*, Nuruddin Farah (2000: 32) irritatedly quotes an acquaintance, a Kenyan hotel manager, who is full of prejudices about Somalis and believes that they behave in a way that does not correspond to their status as asylum seekers or refugees: they are inappropriately arrogant and rent expensive hotel rooms.

Young people have to deal with another stigmatizing attribute: they are youth, a category often described as disruptive because of its unpredictable liminality. Aid workers' representations of youth incorporate common stereotypes: they are difficult to motivate, especially vulnerable to idleness and to HIV infection, and spend most of their time sleeping. Girls are likely to fall into prostitution, boys into substance abuse. Those who have grown up in the camps have always depended on assistance and are, therefore, unable to look after themselves. Yet, these same youth are the people most commonly employed by aid organizations as incentive workers. As individuals, they are appreciated. Some are described as brilliant, full of potential, incredibly resilient and strong-willed for having survived (and in some cases thrived) in such conditions. At a group level, they are a problem-prone class, especially as the scarcity of opportunities is believed to promote harmful behaviour.

Parents, of course, have no prejudice against their own children for being refugees but express concerns related to their lack of prospects after high school, which, they believe, leads to indolence and the adoption of bad habits, and triggers frustration. Some parents and community members feel that young people are at a complete loss in the camp. What concerns them, in addition to their children's limited possibilities, is acculturation. Their depiction of youth often includes westernization, apparent in young people's clothing, tastes in music or lack of command of their own language, history and social codes. Some think young people show disrespect for cultural norms, notably by promiscuous behaviour. On the other hand, parents often stress with pride that their children have managed well given the circumstances, have gained from the camp in terms of education and their ability to engage with people of varied cultural backgrounds, and have adjusted better than they themselves to this foreign environment.

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[135] In 2002, a UNHCR and Save the Children report described extensive sexual exploitation of refugee and internally displaced girls in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone by aid workers who traded services or goods for sex (IRIN, 27 Feb. 2002; UNHCR and SC-U.K. 2002).

While the representation of refugees as victims and cheaters by aid organizations and media are not part of the camp's landscape as such, it is reflected in the design of programmes and the way aid workers engage with refugees. This generic portrayal is thus far from benign and contributes to the marginalization of refugees' voices, notably when it comes to consulting them on decisions affecting their lives (Harindranath 2007: 3). In the same vein, although youth are not necessarily informed about how they are represented at a global level, they are acutely aware of how aid workers view them, as manifested in the way they engage and interact with refugees.

2. The way we believe they look at us

> Hearing the word refugee, you feel something in your heart. It hurts. When I was in the boarding school, they asked if I was from the camp. I would deny and say I was from Lodwar. Otherwise, they would discriminate against you.
>
> Xaawo, 21 years old

When I asked young people how they were perceived as refugees, their frank and lucid responses repeatedly brought up a few elements: refugees are reduced to being nothing but refugees; being a refugee or a beneficiary becomes one's essence; as receivers of aid, they are incapable of looking after themselves, and thus dependent on other people's charity; to be a proper refugee, one has to appear vulnerable; and refugees have no rights, as they are forever visitors in a foreign land.

Axlam's comment is typical of many others: "We are only here as exiles and Kenyans despise us. They tell us that we came from a country where we bomb ourselves. They tell us that we are just refugees and have no rights in this country, that we are visitors. It kills your morale. I have been here for all my life. I came from Somalia in 1991. I was six months old. In school, we learned with Kenyans. When we did better than them, teachers would say: 'How can you be less good than a refugee?' People look down on you. In order to get what you want, you don't say you are a refugee." Many insist that being a refugee amounts to having no freedom of movement and entails being always on guard. "If a Kenyan starts a fight with you and you go to the police, they will say you don't have rights," stated Nafissa. "But this other person has the right of the country. That is why you have to be careful with everything you do."

The essentializing of people to their status is striking at times. Refugees do not fail to notice it. I once attended a farewell party organized by UNHCR for departing staff. Aid workers were invited, as well as some refugees who worked as incentive staff. As the formal speeches went on, the master of ceremonies called upon a "representative of the beneficiaries" to come and speak. This was an established wording to refer to refugees. Human beings were reduced to beneficiaries, defined by the fact that they were recipients of aid. I was sitting next to a young Rwandan I knew fairly well and who worked for UNHCR as a translator. He said he had been asked to give the speech and had refused because he did not want to carry that label. "I am Fabrice. I am not a *beneficiary*." While people know they are unique, they are also mindful that in the eyes of the humanitarian system, they are considered as a flock of beneficiaries first and foremost and that this bears consequences.

Being a refugee or a beneficiary is seen as a sign of helplessness and destitution, points out Mahdi. "When a Kenyan calls you a refugee, it means you are nothing. You are ill and useless. You are under someone's hands, like on the UNHCR logo. You cannot do your own thing. You are being taken care of like a kid. There is no way you can take care of yourself. If you want food, the UN gives you. If you want shelter, go to NCCK [the National Council of Churches of Kenya]." Being under UNHCR's safekeeping involves having to agree to intrusive and controlling policies, fumes Nafissa: "You must inform them of everything you are doing, even small things. If you want to have a party, you must request an authorization." It infantilizes refugees, turns them into lesser humans, something that the incentive system conveys clearly: they do not deserve the same salaries as non-refugees. But there are more pernicious and subtle hints. Youth believe they are treated as intellectually inept. Commenting on training offered by a visiting NGO, Abdulaziz said that the course was excessively simple.

“People always teach us basic things, they always simplify for us as if we were idiots.” A young southern Sudanese states the same, in harsher words: “As long as you are a refugee, people don’t believe that you can reason properly.”

These impressions notably arise from a lack of consideration that translates into demeaning and disrespectful behaviours. People who do not get proper answers to their questions or who are not consulted on decisions that have an impact on their lives feel that they are perceived and treated as inferiors. Some Kenyan high school teachers are blatantly rude to refugee students. In one instance, a student lent her camera to a teacher who had requested it. He did not bring it back until I went to claim it. His sole defence was: “Who is she, anyway?” Similarly, the fact that people are often not told where exactly they are being resettled creates a lot of anxiety, but is also understood as a lack of recognition of their humanness. Commenting on the latter perception, Abdikadir evokes his brothers who, after being resettled to the U.S., were amazed at no longer carrying the refugee label and being regarded as fellow humans. “They say the way they are treated and the attention they get is enough to survive even if they don’t get a job. Human beings have a good feeling if they are received with an open face. It heals you internally.” I am not implying that being a refugee in the U.S. is a perfectly pleasant experience, but Abdulakadir’s comment conveys his belief that the treatment dealt to the residents of Kakuma is dehumanizing.

Moreover, people think that they are expected to adopt behaviours testifying to their vulnerability. Speaking of the early days of Kakuma, Abdulaziz recalls that neighbours kept poultry and cultivated gardens. “But when UNHCR would come and visit the camp, refugees would hide those things because if UNHCR sees you with things that allow you to support yourself, they stop helping you. You need to look miserable if you want to be helped.” This is a recurring theme: playing the vulnerability card is crucial to being assisted as a refugee.

Being conscious of being seen as inferiors, of having limited rights and of being discriminated against can negatively alter people’s self-representation. However, as Zetter (1991: 40) mentions, citing Harrell-Bond (1986), Mazur (1986) and Waldron (1988), it has been shown that “refugees conceive their identity in very different terms from those bestowing the label.” Indeed, it is manifest that although youth find those labels painful, they reject them and regard those who convey and believe them as ignorant. Their depiction of people’s perception of refugees often becomes the background against which they define themselves, by opposition. They are not lesser humans; they have survived in conditions that others would have been unable to face and have managed to gain something from the experience. To a certain degree, being a refugee might not be a weakness but a testimony of strength and determination.

3. The way we look at ourselves

> **U S**
> We are girls and boys.
> We are Sudanese, Somalis and Ethiopians.
> We are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.
> We are footballers and basketball players.
> We are away from our countries.
> Here is where we grew up.
>
> Text written by the photography students for the exhibition of their work

Refugee youth know their condition is stigmatizing, as it constitutes a socially discrediting attribute that gives them a character that is "not quite human" (Goffman 1975: 13 and 15). But individuals are not reducible to their stigma, to their status of beneficiaries and victims. Indeed, if we subscribe to the idea that refugees are thinking individuals with a political subjectivity and not merely victims, knowing how they are perceived does not mean accepting and conforming to that perception and adopting it as their identity. In fact, refugees' portrayal has become an object of resistance and derision. One can still question how much the label influences their self-representation, possibly through opposition rather than compliance. And while they can refuse labels, they cannot ignore the limitations attached to their status.

At first sight, youth patently reject the refugee stigma and the "principle of vulnerability," thus defying the conventional representation of refugees (Agier 2008: 233). The shame of being a refugee that some felt as children is often long gone by the time they have become young adults and has been replaced by the pride of having survived harsh conditions, something that Aziz expressed repeatedly. As a child, he was embarrassed by being a refugee. “But when I grew up and I saw my sister working as headmistress, my brother working for IOM as an interpreter, and me in the film-making programme, I started feeling that I had a unique experience. I became proud because I managed well in school and in those difficult conditions.” This does not prevent young refugees from recognizing and profoundly resenting the handicapping aspect of their condition. They persistently emphasize that with the same level of education as Kenyans, they cannot aspire to the same positions or enjoy the same salaries, and that their bosses may have less education than they do but be in a higher position only because they are Kenyans. But they do not accept this as something justifiable. They denounce it as neither fair nor right, and that is, in short, what they repeated over and over. What they seem to be doing, in seeing and underlining the unfairness and joking about how they are being diminished, is stressing that they are conscious of the prejudiced views people hold of them and how these influence their treatment. There is a team of young women footballers from Kakuma that was once invited to one of Nairobi’s slums, Mathare, for a tournament and community work. They describe being put up in a big room with no sheets or blankets, only mattresses. The latrines were worse than in the camp. They are convinced that they were so poorly accommodated because they are “only” refugees. They were provided with shoes and socks for the match, “so we would look smart,” but had to give them back when they returned to Kakuma. Their sarcastic depiction of the trip makes clear their view that the experience might have been humiliating but the people who treated them with such lack of consideration because of their status are blinded by labels and not worthy of their respect, only their mockery.

In short, they are aware that their social identity is a hindrance, as they are not oblivious to their social environment and the way they are perceived. Yet, they do not simply comply with this misrepresentation. They remain social actors who act on their environment and give meaning to their actions and experience. Being mindful of their situation means that young people know only too well that their social navigation is complicated and limited by the constraints attached to their status (see Vigh 2006: 14, 32). The fact that several state that it is sometimes better to hide their refugee status testifies to that. And that is the frustrating part.

While they intimately sense that being refugees is not their essence, they also realize that it has serious consequences on their real-life possibilities and visions for the future.

3.1 Who are we?

Since the representation of refugees has an impact on their existence, it is reasonable to think that it influences their self-representation and their identity, the formation of identity being a "processus où le social et l'individuel sont intimement imbriqués, dans des configurations complexes" (Kaufmann 2006: 49). Of course, there is no direct transfer of meaning: people do not mindlessly embrace representations of themselves by others. They can reject a perception or partly accept it, a response that varies from one individual to another, as a result of people's unique personal identities. Regardless of the reaction, however, the label remains entangled with people's self-representation, a label that is also constructed and imbued with meaning by refugees themselves (Nyers 2006: xv). The shame attached to the "rejected from resettlement" label (see Chap. 6, 1.1.1) testifies that categories imposed on people are not meaningless.

As noted in Chapter 5, identity is fluid, arising from experience and interaction. While it is a subjective, dialogic and dynamic construct, it cannot be detached from people's social reality, from the objective, the given, and from the feedback of their social setting (Kaufmann 2006: 42, 49, 89). "La liberté de l'acteur n'est pas inversement proportionnelle au poids des déterminations," writes Kaufmann (2006: 49). "Il s'agit de deux processus, qui s'entrecroisent sans cesse et très finement. . . . [I]l ne faut surtout pas oublier que l'individu est fait de matière sociale, qu'il n'est pas une pure conscience (encore moins purement rationnelle) hors de l'histoire et séparée de son contexte." Given the fluidity of identity or self-representation, we can suppose that the interaction with the humanitarian system and its representation of refugees leads to adjustments.

Swann (1987: 1038) maintains that people tend to conform to outside expectations, thus shaping their social reality based on other people's perceptions, although in some cases they vehemently refuse the labels. It is sensible to think that people's dialogue with their social world and their social world's expectations interact closely with their identity. But which social world? Which expectations? Which perceptions? Swann further notes that self-conceptions are developed from childhood from the observation of people's behaviour, the reaction of other people to one's own behaviour and one's comparison with other people (p.1039). When refugee youth were children, their interactions with humanitarian workers were limited, and thus the latter were not the ones providing them with their main feedback. In primary school, their teachers were most often fellow refugees, as were an important proportion of their high school professors. In daily life, they rarely interacted with aid workers but mostly with relatives, members of their community and other refugees. These interactions, in which the stigma attached to being a refugee was probably absent, were quite probably more influential in constructing their self-representation. As Goffman points out, a stigma only exists in relation to others (1975: 13-14). Thus, the refugee stigma surfaced with non-refugees, with outsiders, but probably not within the community. Later, of course, some came to interact more regularly with the humanitarian system as employees, leaders or heads of families but even then, intimate life in the camp remains fairly disconnected from the world of aid workers, although the aid regime profoundly affects its functioning. Nor do all interactions have the same impact on people's identity. As Bisharat (1997: 204) mentions, "[s]ome of the voices in the dialogue may be more compelling than others, speaking to deeper aspects of consciousness, and conjuring up more stirring symbols of inclusion and exclusion."

In addition, while identity is fluid and could be altered by interaction with the humanitarian system, it is not subject to constant radical change either. Swann (1987: 1044) underlines that enduring changes in people's self-conceptions typically stem from a "major reorganization in the way [they] view themselves" and from consistent feedback supporting the new perception. Such shifts are triggered by important transformations in one's life, such as a marriage or a promotion. Adults who came to Kenya as grown-ups and became refugees must have faced significant reorganization and undergone major change. On the other hand, refugee youth who were born in Kenya or arrived when they were too young to remember did not become refugees; they always were, even though it might not have been a key definer (on becoming refugees, see Loizos 1981: 120-21). Moreover, although certain social expectations are attached to most social roles, including that of refugee, youth's social roles are plural: being a refugee is only one of them and not necessarily the most significant (Kaufmann 2006: 71). Their age group, gender, nationality, clan or ethnic group, artistic talent, job or performance at football could also define their social identity. The preeminence of a given social identity is most likely context-specific and it would be overly simplistic to infer that young people’s identities are shaped primarily by their victimhood.

I mentioned earlier that a number of young people stressed that refugees are expected by UNHCR to be vulnerable. Studying the impact of human rights approaches with internally displaced persons living in camps in northern Uganda, Armstrong (2008) reflects that in the camp context, narrations of suffering had become a form of agency (or “victimcy,” in the words of Utas [2005]), since being vulnerable was valued by the humanitarian system and foreigners. Victimcy thus became a strategic choice, but, argues Armstrong (2008: 24), asserting it “tends to be a limiting rather than liberating action. It encourages passiveness and the expression of helplessness that can become internalized.” I would not assume such a direct transfer between acting vulnerable and internalizing vulnerability. Being capable of circumventing the system might also be empowering. However, I noticed that most youth in the camp refused, at least in public, to pretend to be victims for the sake of assistance, which could point toward their refusal to act as victims. Inhetveen (2006: 9) remarks that in Zambia, many refugees labelled themselves as “vulnerable.” This is also the case for older refugees in Kakuma, but youth refused this administrative categorization, at least in informal discussions. They are perhaps more likely to play that card in their interaction with aid organizations, particularly for resettlement purposes. In fact, one could wonder if failing at being selected for resettlement could be interpreted as having failed to represent oneself adequately as a victim. In their daily lives, they nevertheless seem to reject the “principle of vulnerability,” which emerges more often in the discourse of older people.

Young people’s narratives are telling in terms of self-perception. Narratives and identity are intrinsically connected, notes Ricoeur (1991: 188), situating people’s identity in their narratives. Young Somalis’ accounts are stories of courage and survival in taxing conditions, not of destitution and vulnerability. They are survivors, not victims – although the perceived unfairness of resettlement is beyond their control. As I have said before, most never use the word “refugee” when talking of themselves. When I asked Nuradin why he avoided the word, he explained: “Why would I define myself as a refugee? I have always been here. This is my home. Deep inside my heart, I know I am only here because we had problems, but I am not a refugee, I am a person.” As I indicated in Chapter 5, many young people’s intimate representations entail being a mix of Kenyan and Somali. However, they are also mindful that naturalization is unlikely. This is consistent with observations by Chatty (2010a: 29): “[T]here may, in fact, be a commonality, a multivocality and a hetereglossia among refugee youth in situations of prolonged forced migration across the Middle East and North Africa. The importance of identity and the sense of being ‘different’ and ‘the same’, of belonging and of being excluded, is shared by all refugee youth who participated in the study.”

I have not directly answered the question of how Somali youth represent themselves. As singular individuals, first. They are not generic refugees. They have their own nicknames, are known in their communities for particular personality traits. Their self-representation cannot be detached from their gender or their broad social, political, historical and economical context (Chatty 2010: 336; Colson 1999: 37; Fresia 2007: 108; Grabska 2010: 481; Kibreab 2004a: 20). Living in a culturally diverse environment compels them to define themselves by opposition to others: they are Muslims and not Christians; solidarity within their community is greater than in others; they do not accept authority blindly, unlike others. They also believe they have been enriched by their exposure to other cultures, ways of living and beliefs. Then, being refugees has led, at least to some extent, to the construction of new (gendered) roles and expectations, and influenced the way they interact and build relationships (Boelaert et al. 1999: 168; Colson 2003: 8; Loizos 1981: 177-79). They see themselves as essential breadwinners for their families, and thus shouldering responsibilities. I have noted several times before that being a refugee is often understood as leading to a degree of emancipation and progress. Speaking of exile as a fruitful experience is not unique to Somalis. Malkki (1996: 382) made a similar observation with Burundian refugees in Tanzania who saw their exile as a “useful, productive period of hardships that would teach and purify them.”

As I underlined previously, youth in the camp also define themselves in contrast both to Somalis who have stayed in Somalia and to those who have moved to Western countries. They think of themselves as more “civilized” than Somalis in Somalia. They feel they are more open and better equipped to navigate the world. They are more educated, they have become acquainted with the wider world and speak English and Swahili, which attributes are also highlighted by newcomers to the camp. They are peaceful, as opposed to those in Somalia who have “grown up with the sound of bullets” (Abdullahi). However, they are not as "evolved" as Somalis in the West – or not as contaminated, depending on people's perspectives (Warsame explained that young men preferred to marry Somali women in the camp, ideally those who had just arrived from Somalia, rather than those in America, as they were more "pure.") Young women believe they would have had to deal with a stricter social environment in Somalia, would have had fewer opportunities to study, and would have married and had children at a young age. But in these young people's definitions of themselves, the limitations imposed by their status also come up. Although some experience them more strongly than others, all feel they are unable to fully express themselves and their potential. In another context, their accomplishments would have been greater not only because of easier and better access to education, but also as a result of being free to move and work legally. Still, that does not necessarily turn them into victims; they have managed to live on in conditions that might easily have destroyed others.

Conclusion: Surviving refugeeness

Unlike their parents who fled and became refugees, youth who have spent their whole lives in camps have not experienced a drastic change in their status. While young people dislike the restrictions attached to their situation, they have no yardstick of previous personal experiences with which to compare. Of course, they have heard stories and grievances from their parents, but it has never been their lived reality. Growing up, in the eyes of their parents and members of their community, they were not primarily refugees. They were unique individuals. The fact that they were principally refugees for others probably only became a reality when they grew older. Being a refugee and being represented as one combines two difficult-to-reconcile dimensions. On the one hand, it entails having survived, studied and learned to live with others while Somalia was crumbling, and thus being strong. On the other hand, it means being perceived as dependent on charity and thus less capable than others to look after oneself.

While the self-representation of these youth is not compatible with the typical refugee representation, the young people know the latter carries weight and consequences in their lives, particularly in the camp where they are, above all, considered as refugees by the aid community and lawmakers. This entails significant restrictions, turning the camp into a space of control, and limits their prospects. Their rejection of their representation as victims has turned them into survivors. This rejection also reflects their belief that they have the capacity – even the duty – to find a way out and make a better life for themselves. Here, the Somali tradition of mobility comes strongly into play, as movement becomes not only a conceivable option but a desirable one.

Chapter 9 - In memory of the future

Life is what we make it

This is what we want to be in our future.
We have dreams and we want them to become reality.
We want to make our lives better.
We want to be known by the world.
Our lives are in our hands.
We are just waiting for the right time.

- Text written by the photography students for the exhibition of their work

> I am looking for a big future. I want to be someone big, someone other people can look up to. I don't want to live the life I have been living. I want a better life. A better life in which, maybe I can wake up in the morning, go to work. Maybe I am earning enough to take care of myself. Maybe I have kids and I am taking good care of them. I am a role model to my kids and others in the community. Maybe I am doing something that helps other people.
>
> Zahra, 23 years old

When I first wondered about young people's ambitions, expectations and dreams for their future, I imagined that they would not only focus on resettlement, but also make backup plans. I was mostly proven wrong. Although some make backup plans, they are a minority. Most feel that no other decent and legal way out of the camp exists or is worth considering. Once abroad, they wish to study, find good jobs and have their own families.

In previous chapters, I discussed young people's views of their past and present. This exploration leads us into the future. People's decisions on education, occupation and social relationships speak of their past and their present, but also of their future orientation, as expectations and hopes motivate choices and everyday behaviour (Nurmi 1991: 1; Raffaelli and Koller 2005: 250; Stoddard et al. 2011: 2). In addition to being shaped by the individual's personality, age and cultural setting, future orientation is influenced by the possibilities and constraints of the present and experiences from the past. The past and the present therefore feed into people's perception of their future, which, in return, conditions the present as it alters how people plan and undertake their own development (Salmela-Aro et al. 2007: 690-91; Seginer 2008: 272-73). In other words, the reality of the camp is lived in the present, a present that is structured by the past and that influences the envisioned future by affecting perspectives and ambitions.

This chapter is about Somali refugee youth's perspective on their future selves. Such a reflection is especially relevant with people in their late teens through their early 20s, as this period of "emerging adulthood" is filled with transitions and life decisions such as shifting from education to work or starting a family (Salmela-Aro et al. 2007: 691). It is a time commonly described as one of "identity exploration, self-focus, possibilities, feeling in-between, and instability" (Salmela-Aro et al. 2007: 692, drawing on Arnett 2004). Nurmi (1991: 49) distinguishes three processes related to youths' orientation to the future. First, they set goals linked to their motivation and their expectations. Then, they plan how to realize them and finally, they assess whether they will be able to achieve them. To complete these steps and anticipate future events and give them meaning, people must envision a context in which goals will be realized (Nurmi 1991: 4, 6).

Becoming, for Somali youth in Kakuma, first entails leaving the camp, where their capacity to take on adult roles is hampered by limited educational and work opportunities and a lack of economic stability. While the camp might have allowed space for reinvention, redefinition and even learning, to benefit from the experience, one must break free. And there, an imagination fuelled by mass media that transcends national borders and expands the range of possible routes (at least virtually) comes to play a significant role.

Given the unpredictability of their ultimate location, the steps of planning and assessing the feasibility of goals are hard to accomplish. In general, youth's plans are indefinite and they know it. They have big dreams, but also know that they will have to adjust to their circumstances and that they do not control a key variable: whether they will be resettled or not. Their hoped-for selves[136] are relatively clear: they want to live in America, study, find a good job, set up house and have a family. However, their expected selves are less clear, as most refuse to consider non-resettlement as a possibility and feel that it is only in the West that they would be able to make concrete and realistic plans, as new "social horizons" would emerge.

Vigh (2006: 30-31) defines social horizons as "spaces of possibilities and spheres of orientation that constantly arise in the interaction between agents in motion and the shifting social and political circumstances they seek to move within." In Kakuma, these horizons are subject to constant negotiation and redefinition, as constraints and possibilities evolve, sometimes due to changing circumstances outside of their realms of control, sometimes due to their own movements and transformation. Resettlement opportunities may open up; conditions in Somalia deteriorate or improve; new scholarships are offered, others are suspended; controls in the rest of the country become stricter or more lax; studies are completed, a new job is secured, a family situation changes; or new smuggling routes to other countries open up. On these shifting sands, youth continually readjust and revise their plans, swinging between hope and discouragement. Speaking of people in crisis, Vigh (2008: 20) underlines that "people constantly produce future scenarios and terrains of action by anticipating and predicting the near and distant future through the social imaginary."

Discussing people's future aspirations involves considering the "where," but also who and what they want to be and become. Where youths' envisioned futures will unfold is the first element I examine in this chapter. Once out of the camp, youth aspire to shape up their lives. I will then explore what they want to do and be, which are crucial aspects of "becoming." I will conclude with some thoughts on the tension between a growing disenchantment with waiting and the hope that some day it will be their turn to leave, and on their overall optimism, in spite of the gap between their ambitions and their reality. Through this discussion, I wish to reflect on youth's views on their future in a context choked with restrictions, and on their ability to plan for the future when an essential variable, place, feels mostly beyond their control.

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[136] The possible selves theory distinguishes between "hoped-for selves," "expected selves" and "feared selves." The first designates what someone would like to become, the second what someone could realistically become and the third, what someone fears to become. Hoped-for selves tend to be grounded in little concrete knowledge and may have limited impact on behaviour. Expected selves do influence people's plans and behaviour and feared selves may guide avoidance behaviour (Markus and Nurius 1986: 954; Yowell 2002: 63-64).

1- In search of a place to call home

> Mahdi: Where life takes me, I will be happy. Even within Kakuma, I am happy despite challenges. There is no day where I say that I have had enough. If life takes me to America, I'll be happy. If I am not resettled, I'll be fine. I'll find a job. Maybe I'll get an opportunity in Nairobi and get some money to send to my family here. I could also go to other parts of Africa. I am sure I can help myself. I am somehow educated.
>
> Me: Could you stay in Kakuma?
>
> Mahdi: Staying here for another 20 years would be disgusting. Unless that is what God has written for me, I don't want to stay here.

Where people imagine they will live is an important aspect of their perspective on the future: plans, possibilities and aspirations are dependent, at least to some extent, on people's location. Ambitions can flourish in certain settings, but might be out of reach in others. In the refugee regime, the search for permanent solutions that enable refugees to secure the political, economic, legal and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity focuses primarily on the location where people can lead a proper life. Three durable solutions are usually acknowledged: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration or resettlement to a third country. Recent thinking has highlighted the need to be more creative in the search for solutions, notably by considering intermediate integration[137] and mobility[138] within and across borders, as migration might help a number of refugees regain physical, legal and livelihood security (Crisp 2008: 6; Long 2010a: 13-15; 2011: 14-17; 2014; UNHCR 2007: para. 52; 2008: para. 91-97).

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[137] Banki (2004: 2-3) defines intermediate integration as the "ability of the refugee to participate with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region." It might entail partial rather than full self-sufficiency. Unlike local integration, it might not include cultural and political participation, or full legal rights. High levels of refugee integration are characterized by the fact that refugees are not restricted in their movements, may own or have access to land, can participate in the local economy, are moving towards self-sufficiency, are able to utilize local services such as health facilities and schools and are dispersed among the population.

[138] Mobility includes legal migration for labour, educational or marital purposes, at a national and international level. It can be permanent or temporary (Long 2011: 14-17; Sturridge 2011: 1).

Repatriation has become the preferred durable solution since the 1980s, notably due to host countries' unwillingness to offer local integration to refugees – and to a sedentarist bias, according to several scholars (e.g., Al-Rasheed [1994: 202], Malkki [1995a: 508] and Verdirame and Harrell-Bond [2005: 335]). However, it is not envisioned as a reasonable option by Somali youth, at least in the near future. While many would consider formal local integration in Kenya a suitable option, it remains improbable for large groups of refugees. Resettlement is by far people's preference, but it is an unlikely prospect for a significant proportion of refugees (see Chap. 6). In the absence of resettlement, leaving the camp by one's own means and settling irregularly in Kenya or in another country might appear to be the only truly available option. But not all are willing or able to take such a chance.

In the next pages, I consider youth's views on where they see themselves settling down, through a discussion on resettlement (brief, as I have previously examined the matter: see Chap. 6), and an exploration of alternative mobility and hypothetical settlement in Somalia.

1.1 When we get to America

> As refugees, we always live in some kind of imaginary hope. You cannot say that you are going to the U.S. You find people who have finished the process for five or six years and are waiting for their flight. I am not waiting. I have finished all the process, but I cannot say that we will go to the U.S. So I don't know if I will go to Nairobi, Somalia or the U.S. My aim is to go to USA.
>
> Aziz, 23 years old

For many young people, America is the only answer to the question of where they want to live. For those whose resettlement process is ongoing, this may possibly materialize, but it is uncertain and so is the time frame. Once there, a number imagine that the adjustment to a new life will be challenging, but worth it. Somehow, while life in the camp is not easy and may not nurture hope, the prospect of resettlement helps keep youth hopeful. Some focus on the education and work experience they can acquire in Kakuma, which they trust will help them to succeed in the West, while putting off getting married, to avoid creating further delays. "We are studying here, so we are not illiterate when we get there and people don't make fun of us," explains Ayan. However others assume that these skills will not be valued in the U.S. and therefore have limited motivation to work or study in the camp. They plan to study once they are abroad. For now, they are killing time and waiting for resettlement.

Such endless waiting can also have a disempowering effect on youth (and people in general): their future is not in their hands, but depends on the goodwill of others. This feeling of not being in control of one's life sometimes makes planning for the future seem like a useless endeavour. "My future…" ponders Bilal, 18. "It all depends on UNHCR. If they take me to a good place, I can perform. But if they leave me here, I don't know what will happen. I have not decided. I cannot leave the camp. I will still depend on UNHCR." Such powerlessness is somehow dire, as the absence of resettlement seems to equate to the end of hope. Yet, those who have been rejected for resettlement do not necessarily lose hope. While some live in denial, others intend to leave the camp or manage to build a life in Kakuma, while scanning the horizon for better options.

1.2 If I don't go to America: Immobility and mobility

> I had some plans, sometime back, but now [that I have been rejected for resettlement] I am really confused. I don't have a plan. I don't think I can go back to Somalia because I don't know that country. I don't know what it looks like. Even if I went back, I would need to work. In Africa, you find a job through knowing people. People need to know where you were born and where you came from. They can reject me because I am educated. In Kenya, I cannot live outside of the camp. In some countries, if you stay five or six years, you will become a citizen. I have been in Kenya for 22 years, but I am not a citizen. If I could be resettled, I would have a plan for the future. I was planning to become a politician in my country of resettlement. If not that, a doctor, since I have done a nursing course with IRC [the International Rescue Committee].
>
> Abdullahi, 24 years old

As illustrated by Abdullahi's quote, some liken being rejected for resettlement to their lives coming to a standstill. But in fact, Abdullahi's words do not fully reflect his reality. In real life, significant changes are occurring: he recently got married, has become a father and has a job and thus, is building a life in the camp. However, he cannot imagine himself being there for years to come. That feeling is common, and some who have been rejected for resettlement keep talking about it as a possibility or refuse to consider other options, even after having been told that cases will not be submitted twice. There is always the lingering hope that a decision will be reviewed, or that another country will agree to receive them. Such denial might be occasioned by the scarcity of alternatives.

Unlike those who are tired of waiting for resettlement but still hope for a positive outcome, some rejected applicants seem to live in a slightly different reality, fearing “indefinite stasis.” (Griffiths 2004: 2001). Griffiths (2014: 1992), writing about refused asylum seekers and immigration detainees in the U.K., evokes “a sense of temporal difference [that] contributes to the experiential distance many refused asylum seekers feel from others, including those who physically share the same space.” She later writes (p.2001) that “people’s lives can also be made chaotic through a lack of change,” which resonates with the reality of those who are rejected for resettlement and feel there are no other options.

Others make backup plans that typically involve leaving Kakuma by one’s own means, an option that is usually set aside as long as resettlement remains a possibility, as this is the safest way to reach a Western country and obtain legal status. In the absence of such a prospect, most believe it makes sense to try their luck. This is what Nuradin stated when his close friends Faarax and Mahdi left for Nairobi: they were right to go and try to work in Nairobi even if it entailed being in an irregular situation, as their resettlement was forever pending. Moreover, if Somalia became safer, Faarax wanted to move there and start a business. (A year later, he was actually resettled to the U.S.) Zahra, who holds little faith in resettlement, is actively looking for a suitable country in Africa to move to, one where refugees face fewer restrictions. But how she will manage to reach that country is unclear. Yasin, who, like Abdullahi, has married and started his family in Kakuma, has no intention of staying in the camp indefinitely, but no longer counts on resettlement. He hopes to find a way to study, which would allow him to successfully settle elsewhere. “What I would like to do if I get the money is to join a university in Kenya, or maybe in Uganda. I like Makarere University [in Kampala, Uganda]. My English teacher used to tell me about it.” Again, however, he can hardly explain how this will become reality. Somehow, he has managed to successfully navigate his environment since finishing high school. He therefore feels confident that he will reach his goal, although he also has moments of great despair when he fears being trapped in Kakuma.

I mentioned in Chapter 6 that settling elsewhere in Kenya appears to many as a possible option, even though the government has been persistently opposed to formal local integration. Regardless of the absence of legal status, a number of refugees live and work informally in Kenyan cities, de facto integrating in the country. This makes it a conceivable avenue. However, living in an irregular situation is not only stressful but also costly, as refugees are commonly asked to pay bribes. Similarly, they all know of refugees who have left Kenya for another country where they either live irregularly or have claimed asylum. But this entails paying high fees for travel and taking significant risks, something that youth are well informed of (see Chap. 6). This limits people's desire and capacity to move out of the camp, turning mobility into a relevant strategy only for those who can gather sufficient financial or social capital (Sturridge 2011: 5). Young people often point out that they cannot afford to live elsewhere, although many manage to spend some time in other parts of the country. Moving by one's own means also appears harder to envisage for young women than for men: their families are more reluctant to let them leave and many, having married young, have to look after their children.[139] If settling legally outside of the camp were possible, many would do so, rather than wait in the camp in the hope of a hypothetical resettlement. After all, youth commonly say they feel like Kenyans. But for the time being, only informal local integration (or further movement) can be envisioned.

1.3 Discovering Somalia

There is another option: "returning"[140] to Somalia, a country that they do not know but where they could move and work in complete legality. During the period when I was in Kakuma, repatriation was a sensitive topic, partly because of the growing political support for the quick return of refugees that made people fear that they could be forced to go back. Although there had been political change in south-central Somalia in the previous months, notably with the presidential elections in August 2012, stability and safety remained uncertain. For the last few years, the Kenyan government had been promoting the creation of a safe zone, "Jubbaland," inside Somalia, to halt the arrival of refugees and smooth the way for the repatriation of others (see Chap. 2, 1.1.2; HRW 2012; Lindley 2011: 29-30).[141] It was feared that such a plan, that evokes the unsuccessful 1992 Cross-Border Operation, would lead to involuntary returns, and thus fail to respect recognized standards (see Chap. 2, 2.1; Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 24-27).[142]

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[139] For an interesting perspective on the feminization of immobility and the masculinity attached to movement, see Hyndman and Giles (2011).

[140] I am using the term "return," which is the word youth commonly use to speak of their possible settlement in Somalia. In fact, the term is not always appropriate, as many have never been to Somalia and would therefore not be returning to Somalia but going there for the first time.

It is often assumed that refugees long to go home. Studying the myth of return among two groups of Iraqi refugees in England, Al-Rasheed (1994) underlines that not all refugees want to repatriate and that this desire is influenced by their relationship with their country of origin and its population. After pointing out that people were still fleeing Somalia, youth repeatedly remarked that returning to an unknown country notorious for its violence held little attraction. While young people consider themselves culturally Somali, they do not necessarily feel a strong connection to Somalia, as noted by Warsame: "If I am not resettled, my philosophy would be to stay in Kenya. There is no way I would go back to Somalia. I came from Mogadishu. I know nothing about that place, which is why I can't go back. I have never seen it, but I have heard and learned some history, saw things on the Internet. If I go back to Somalia, I will be a foreigner. It is just like going to the U.S. It would mean starting another life."

Repatriation may be the preferred international response to refugee movements, but it might not be the optimal solution for all refugees, especially in protracted situations (Kibreab 1999: 390). It might entail significant losses, notably in terms of livelihood, access to education and services (Jacobsen 2005: 9-10; Long 2010a: para. 29, 38, 42; Omata 2012: 265). This would probably be the case for refugees returning to south-central Somalia, where, after two decades of conflict and instability and in the absence of a functioning government, public amenities are very limited and in a poor state (UNOCHA 2012: 22). The prospect of repatriating to the rural areas which their families left, with their limited public facilities, seems difficult to envisage for youth born and raised in camps that, in comparison, feel like cities. As I mentioned earlier, progress is associated with moving to a Western country. Going back would therefore be a form of regression rather than progression, a failure. Like Afghan youth in Iran, Somalis believe that gains made in exile, notably in raising their status and having greater access to education, will be lost if they move to Somalia (Hoodfar 2008: 181). The fact that many refugees come from minority groups who felt excluded from the Somali socio-political landscape is another factor that makes repatriation unappealing.

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[141] Some returns had actually started to occur, but might have been motivated by deteriorating conditions in refugee camps rather than by improvements in Somalia. In March and April 2012, some 5,200 refugees returned to Somalia by their own means, according to UNHCR's Somalia population movement tracking. It is not known whether such movements were temporary or permanent. Refugees returning to Somalia cited the resumption of agricultural activities, but also reduced services and lack of livelihood opportunities in the camps, to explain their decision (UNHCR 2012f: 2). It has been repeatedly noted that a large number of refugees repatriated from Kenya to Somalia in 1993-94 because of the insecurity and deteriorating conditions in the camps, and not because conditions were conducive in Somalia (Collin 1996: 89-97; Waldron and Hasci 1994: 13-15).

[142] In 1992, in response to pressures from the Government of Kenya, UNHCR attempted to create a preventive zone in southern Somalia to encourage refugees in Kenya to repatriate (Hyndman 2000: 21).

While moving to Somalia is hardly conceivable in the near future, that does not mean that returning to Somalia will never be an option. A few speak of their desire to visit the country or imagine that they could live there at some point. Youth often plan to be resettled first. Then, after completing their studies, they would work and once they had gained sufficient experience and resources, would consider returning to Somalia to establish themselves if it had become peaceful. Resettlement and mobility could thus become a step towards an eventual return, rather than an end in itself, something that Chatty et al. (2010) also observed with Sahrawi refugee youth. While returning is not excluded, it is not envisioned as the next move and remains highly hypothetical, as it is usually contingent upon having studied and then finding a good job, as well as security and stability in Somalia. Abdi is one who speaks of such plans. He rejects the idea of going back to Somalia directly, even though it is where he ultimately wants to live. “I first want to go to a place where I can get enough education. Here, we can only do a diploma, but I want to be a doctoral student. In Kenya, it is difficult to do so. I am expecting that one day, I will be resettled to Canada, America or another country. There, I can get education and plan my future. Once I am established, then I will be able to go back to Somalia. I will share what I learned and teach it to other people.” The discourse of those rejected for resettlement often shows slightly more openness to a quicker return than that of those who have either been accepted or are still in the process.

A number, such as Awo, underline that their studies would be useful to rebuild Somalia and help Somalis, but have ambiguous feelings towards Somalia: "If my dreams come true, I can study medicine and then I would like to go back. Going back would mean I can be of assistance to my people. For now, I can't think of going because of many fears. Most of the time, people who are educated, when they go back, they are considered like spies. Al-Shabab doesn't like people who speak other languages. That scares me, but as time goes, I will see how the situation is." Somali youth interviewed in Australia and Finland also expressed the will to help people in Somalia and play a role in rebuilding their country (Omar 2008: 74, 86). Others, especially young women, are adamant about never wanting to set foot there. As I noted in Chapter 5, they believe not only that it would be a foreign land, but also one where, as women, their freedom would be further restricted. Several also express doubts about the likelihood of Somalia becoming peaceful and stable, as underscored by Ibrahim: "I don't hope to go back. That land is not a safe place. If you go, you don't know if you will come back safe. If I am resettled, I will just be a Somali U.S. citizen." Many stress that they do not have to be in Somalia to remain Somali and that being elsewhere will not alter their identity. For boys, this sometimes transpires through comments on polygamy, which they somehow plan to achieve abroad by having a wife in the U.S. and wives in Africa. For girls, remaining Somali is often more a matter of maintaining good Somali values and staying part of a Somali community.

In their hopes for a future abroad, young people continue to see themselves as Somalis and not as Westerners. At some point, returning to Somalia could make sense. Hoodfar (2008: 181) made similar observations about Afghan refugees in Iran. While they felt pride in being Afghan, they had no desire to move to Afghanistan, at least not before finishing their education. Like Somalis, they did not see a contradiction in claiming their Afghan identity and not wanting to live in the country. A number of them did, however, hope to finish their education and then return to Afghanistan to contribute to the reconstruction of the country. The desire to finish their education was actually given as the main reason why they needed to postpone their return. In Kakuma, there is at times a visible tension, even a contradiction, between youth's strong stand that returning cannot be envisioned and their expressed will to help "their people," to visit and possibly return to live in Somalia in some elusive future.

I have already referred to how media reports and frequent interaction with the rest of the world and with their immediate environment feed youth's imagination. This certainly comes into play when they assess where they want to settle. Such interaction sometimes seems to motivate agency and to compel youth to seek a way out of the camp. In other instances, it has the opposite effect and the constant awareness of the fact that people have better lives in places that are not easily accessible induces despondency. Moreover, there is a clear link between the vagueness of where they might end up living and the difficulty they have concretely planning for who and what they will become in the future.

2. Becoming who we are

> I know somebody called Hussein who finished college, went to Nairobi and worked for some years. He got money and opened a shop. Now he has a big shop. That is the path I want to follow. You see, we have matured: many people have the concept that they can change their life without depending on UNHCR.
>
> Yasin, 28 years old

> I want to become one of the best engineers in the world. I want to have a company of my own, like Safaricom [a leading Kenyan mobile network operator], probably in Canada. I want to fight against wars. I want Africa to stop having refugee problems. I have had an experience in a camp since I was born and I don't want people to experience that. I would love to fight for peace and education for women wherever I will be. I always feel that women are underestimated by men. I want to prove to the world that women can be as great as men.
>
> Amran, 18 years old

Writing about Palestinian youth, Chatty (2010: 318) underlines how they "consistently express a willingness to act to improve their situation as well as a cautious and measured optimism for their future." Despite experiencing difficult living conditions and events beyond their control, they manage to "maintain a sense of agency against all odds and hold on to aspirations for a better personal and community future." Similar observations can be made about Somali youth in Kakuma, whose discourse on the future is, at times, not only one of "measured optimism" but truly hopeful. In setting ambitions, parents, peers and teachers are influential. Youth often share and co-regulate their goals with their peers, notably when it comes to education and trajectories, which could be why young Somalis in Kakuma often have similar views on their future (Salmela-Aro 2010: 17-18).

Few can describe how they intend to achieve their ambitions, probably because these are so dependent on where they will find themselves, something they commonly feel they have little or no control over. The lack of "temporal predictability" (Griffiths 2014: 2005) makes it difficult to imagine the future in concrete terms. This might explain why they often have more to say about where they want to be and what they dream of being once they leave the camp, than about what they will (realistically) be and do, or fear to become. In this section, after considering young people's ambitions, I briefly look at parents' hopes and expectations for their children.

2.1 Dreaming of the unknown

> I want to be an oncologist. In Kenya there are only eight. In Somalia, there is none. Africa has only a few. Most people who die of cancer, they just know what they have at a late stage. You could do something at an early stage, before it goes to other parts of the body. I just want to help them and Africa.
>
> Abyan, 17 years old

In speaking of the future, Somali youth most frequently focus on their desire to get a good education. Career goals are also regularly mentioned. Family and marriage, as well as wealth, come up relatively often. Such themes are similar to those listed by youth in other contexts (Nurmi 1991: 14; Raffaelli and Koller 2005: 257; Tlhabano and Schweitzer 2007: 16). Education is key because it is often seen as the only way to have a proper future, to become someone "respectable" or, in Yasin's words "a big person." Writing about refugees in the U.K., Stevenson and Willott (2007: 676) make an observation which would apply equally to Somali youth in Kakuma: "All of the individuals interviewed spoke about their high aspiration for themselves and their desire to use higher education as a route out of poverty and exclusion and as a means of establishing a better and more secure way of life for themselves. They were in no doubt about the barriers they faced in trying to accomplish their ambitions but were, nonetheless, determined to do so."

Most youth underline that they want to study in another country rather than in Kenya. This could stem from the limited access to higher education that they have in Kenya. In point of fact, many also affirm that if they were offered a scholarship to study at a Kenyan university, they would happily do so (and applicants for the few scholarships offered to refugees in Kenya are many: see Chap. 4, 1.2). In the absence of such an option, however, studying abroad after resettlement becomes a more reasonable aspiration. While they know that it may not be easy for refugees to pursue higher education in a new country, this remains as one of the big gains expected from such a move. Many have great educational and work ambitions – they will become doctors, nurses, professors, ambassadors or engineers. Given that a good number have not managed to complete high school, it is difficult not to deem their plans unrealistic.

While there is not necessarily a mismatch between their hoped-for location and where they will eventually settle – a significant number of them will be resettled at some point – there is discordance between the studies and career path they hope for and their expected reality. Clearly, they know their ambitions are not always realistic, as they mention that studying in America is expensive and that refugees have to earn their living, which gets in the way of education. Even so, their hoped-for future remains rather optimistic, although non-specific. There is a kind of magical thinking associated with moving to the West. Although they have all heard about the difficulties faced by refugees resettled in the U.S., they still believe that once there, education will somehow become possible, and wealth accessible.

In all their vagueness, their ambitions convey that they do not see themselves as mere victims and their optimism may help some to keep going and stay engaged. They are looking for a way out of a life that does not suit them and aiming for a proper future, but they also have to confront limitations and elements far beyond their control (see Honwana and De Boeck 2005: 8). It has been pointed out that expectations concerning the future tend to vary according to sex (Nurmi 1991: 30; McCabe and Barnett 2000: 64). In a review of the literature on youth's ambitions, Nurmi (1991: 30) writes that males focus more on the material aspects of life, through education and career, while females place importance on family, religion and making a contribution to society. Such a stereotypical divide is not obvious in Kakuma. Although women speak more often of their desire to have a family, men also regularly mention it. Religion seems important for all, as do education and having a career.

2.2 Children's duty

Children's ambitions and views on the future are greatly influenced by their parents and family. Parents play a role in shaping their children's interests and goals, serve as models and inspire their children's attitude towards the future. Peers and the school environment are also determinant, although they may have more impact on short- than on long-term decisions (Nurmi 1991: 11, 32). Stevenson and Willott (2007: 683) note that refugee parents tend to have great educational ambitions for their descendants, for the same reasons as their children: they see education as the best route out of poverty and critical to their integration. In Kakuma, parents' perspectives on the future are often darker than those of the younger generation and, even more strongly than their children, they consider resettlement the only solution that can lead to a bright future. In its absence, there is little hope, and parents are concerned, as highlighted by Khadija:

> Our greatest worry is our children. They are the most unsettled. They have no idea of their future. They only want to go to Europe or America. . . . Some stop going to school, they have no motivation. It is difficult to be motivated when you live in a camp. They think: "I was born here, I will die here." Some want to become Kenyans, so they can be citizens and be free. But they cannot become Kenyans. Most of those who have been here for long were sure that they would go [to a third country through resettlement]. They were waiting and still are. But those who have been rejected sometimes decide to go by themselves. They don't want to be like us, become old in the camp.

Parents worry, but also see their children as their future, which is common in refugee situations (Dryden-Peterson and Giles 2010: 2). They hope that their descendants will be capable of looking after them properly if they are resettled. Faarax's mother says that she is expecting her children to study in America, so they can "work hard, have a good career, help me and help other people who are in need. I am tired and I need some rest. I will eat the food they bring." Youth are conscious of their parents' expectations and feel a responsibility towards them. Hence their certainty that they have to leave the camp and be successful is also motivated by the recognition that their parents count on their support.

Conclusion: Between hope and frustration, constraints and opportunities

While youth obviously have different ambitions and views regarding their future, they share the belief that to achieve their dreams, they must leave the camp, ideally through resettlement to America. In fact, most refuse to consider the possibility of not being resettled and appear unable to make alternative plans. This does not stem from a lack of imagination. Young people know that opportunities are scarce in Kakuma and that their rights are limited outside the camp. They are well informed that they can navigate Kenya, but at their own risk. Similarly, if they can muster sufficient means and are willing to gamble with their lives, they might reach other countries, but do not know if they will be able to secure legal status. Moreover, Somalia can hardly be seen as home by people who have never visited the country and have heard mainly about its perils.

In a context where uncertain prospects of resettlement are the only decent exit, youth's hopeful but vague ambitions and future orientations are somewhat surprising. Still, they seem to prevent many young people from giving up. The environment in which people live and grow influences their development of values and expectations for the future. Violence and poverty may limit one's ability to plan for the future (Stoddard et al. 2011: 2). Kakuma is a poor and insecure environment, but it is also one that offers youth some potential, although this is limited and, sometimes, beyond their control. While the camp is a place of constraints, it can, paradoxically, become a land of opportunity, as it gives access to possible resettlement, basic education, other facilities and even work, albeit poorly paid. Young people know others who have left the camp through resettlement or by their own means and who manage relatively well. They also know of people who have secured scholarships or have started their own reasonably successful businesses. This may have helped in shaping some positive expectations, despite the limited options. Their optimism could yield positive outcomes, as being hopeful about the future during adolescence is linked with the capacity to adjust to circumstances and initiate action towards goals, and with the belief that things can change (Raffaelli and Koller 2005: 251; Stoddard et al. 2011: 2). In that respect, positive future orientations and plans for the future can play a protective role and enhance motivation

(McCabe and Barnett 2000: 63-64; McWhirter and McWhirter 2008: 182: Seginer 2008: 272). In contrast, hopelessness is associated with the expectation that nothing will change for the better and thus, is more likely to lead to inaction (Stoddard et al. 2011: 2).

Nonetheless, the picture is not always rosy and many live moments of great despair and disempowerment. Twenty-year-old Abdulaziz, talking about how he imagined his future, observed: “Sometimes it is mixed up because you don’t have the assurance that you will actually be someone, somewhere. When you are a refugee, you don’t know if you will go back to your country, stay here, or go elsewhere, so it is a bit confusing.” The older youth become, the less optimistic they appear to be, probably because time is passing and nothing is happening. They feel caught in a suspended time during a period of their lives where they should be preparing their future and establishing themselves as adults. Despite this, most manage to hold on to fairly optimistic views, maybe because otherwise, they would have to consider themselves as stuck in an “indefinite stasis,” a thought which is either inconceivable or would lead to great distress. Youth keep scanning their broad network for possibilities, but also realize that essential elements remain beyond their control: resettlement, Kenya’s policy towards refugees and Somalia’s instability, all of which greatly influence their lives, but are unaffected by their views, dreams and ambitions.

A note on life after the camp

> It is not how I expected it. I wanted to go to university, do interesting things, but now, I need to survive. In Africa, I had this excuse that I would become someone in the USA. Here, I no longer have any excuse. I have to face the reality. You always have to pay your rent and your bills. I am disappointed to be where I am now. The first year is over and I am not even going to school. Maybe things will change, but I don't know. I always used to calm myself by thinking I'd go to the U.S. But here, it is permanent. I am no longer going somewhere else. My mom still worries about what she will cook. She worries that if we get sick, we will not be able to pay the rent. Even people born here, they have problems, unless their fathers were rich. People take big loans to go to school. I am disappointed with things.
>
> Aziz, 23 years old

Aziz was resettled in Columbus, Ohio, in 2013. In the year that followed, his parents and siblings joined him, except for Awo who is studying at a Canadian university. Aziz works as a translator and two of his siblings have enrolled in college. Since I left the camp, I have periodically received messages from people back in Kakuma informing me that they were being resettled or had decided to leave by their own means. Somehow, people seem to write most often when they are about to move, as if they finally had news worth sharing. Fatuma has moved to Nairobi, but fears that the Kenyan authorities could send her back to the camp at any time. Abdikadir first landed in California with his family, but soon moved to Minnesota, where he was told the rent would be cheaper. He has been hired by a resettlement organization to help arriving refugees find homes and schools for their children, and get access to social services. He plans to enrol in school soon and complete a liberal arts degree that he started in Kakuma. Khadra left Kakuma a few months before I did. After being in the U.S. for more than a year, she was still finding it difficult and described her job as miserable. A year later, her parents finally joined her and she was hoping that her life would become easier in their company. Nafissa landed in Regina, Saskatchewan, and is going to school. The two brothers Nuradin and Warsame live in Ohio and both work long hours to send money every month to their mother and younger siblings in Kenya. Faarax was recently resettled to the U.S. Mahdi enrolled in school in Nairobi. Many more remain in Kakuma, still hoping for a way out.

In the year and a half that followed my stay in Kakuma, in addition to keeping up intermittent contact by e-mail, Facebook or phone with several people I knew from the camp, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with Somali youth who grew up in Kakuma or in one of the Dadaab camps and who have left these places relatively recently (between 2006 and 2013). I did about half of the interviews in person and the others either by phone or via Skype. I knew two of the interviewees from Kakuma (Warsame and Aziz). Two others came to Canada with scholarships from the World University Service of Canada (Sagal and Ilhaan) and another one through family reunification (Samakab). Ilhaan, 26, was back in Dadaab for an internship when I spoke with her. One interviewee has moved to Somalia to work after completing his education in Dadaab (Amin). Two are dividing their time between Kenya and Somalia (Absame and Aden) and two are studying in Nairobi (Hajiro and Omar). With the exception of those that I met in Kakuma, I was introduced to all of them by people I knew from Kakuma or Dadaab or by refugees I interviewed who had already left the camp.

These exchanges corroborate observations made in the camp, but also suggest that once people no longer live there, they adopt a more critical perspective than those still in the camp. This note briefly presents their reflections.

1. Of gains and losses

In the eyes of people who have left the camp, it remains an environment that gave them access to education, allowed them to learn to coexist with people of other clans or ethnic groups and made them strong and able to survive in challenging circumstances. “Looking back, Kakuma is not a place where one should live, but I don’t regret the 18 years I spent there because I used every opportunity,” remarks Warsame one year after being resettled to Columbus, Ohio. “If you come to the U.S. with nothing, you will struggle. Without Kakuma, I wouldn’t have achieved much here. Kakuma was like a military training. Once you adjust to it, you can live anywhere in the world." But the camp is also described as a repressive setting that imposes unacceptable limitations on movement, education and work. The critical stance taken by former camp dwellers may result partly from the fact that they no longer have to endure it. It may also be associated with their having a basis for comparison and enunciation through being elsewhere, and their integration of a new grammar to articulate their experience. This comes out in Ilhaan's comment: "As soon as I came [to Canada], I was able to move from place to place. I moved from Toronto to Ottawa. I was conscious that this was something I could not do for many years and that my family could still not do, as they were still in the camp. I felt guilty for my own freedom and realized how oppressive the camp was. Still, I tell people that it is not as bad as they think, because life goes on when you are in it."

It is not so straightforward, however. The camp may have been difficult, but it is also the place where these young people spent most of their lives and where their sensorial memory developed. For many, including people who left several years ago, it continues to be the location that feels the closest to home, in particular because their families are still there, and so are many of their friends. It is the place where they had the strongest sense of community, where they still have many landmarks and where most of the people who have a personal understanding of their experience live, as expressed by Hajiro, 25, who studies in Nairobi and lives in Eastleigh:

> I don't feel home here, even though I have friends, we don't share the same history. We don't share a lot. The kind of life they live is far from yours. When you are back in the camp, memories come back. My friends are there. We have the same history. Here, if you explain what you went through, people are in disbelief. Some don't even know that Dadaab refugee camp exists. They only know that Somalia has been in conflict for two decades, that there is terrorism. They think you must be psychologically affected, that you must be inferior. It is difficult to explain who you are and what you experienced. They say: "What do you mean missing a cup of tea? No clean water? No toilet? Are there places like that?" They don't understand. So you just talk about something else.

Although those who can, visit their friends and family back in the camps, and might even work there, no one aspires to return to live there permanently. In fact, whenever possible, and often by working long hours and at the expense of their own comfort, they have helped their families to move to Nairobi. They may not miss the camp, but many who have resettled in the West yearn for the ease of being in Kenya. While they had limited rights there, having grown up in the country and been educated in the Kenyan system, Omar feels that they "became Somali *sijui*" (the term used for Kenyan Somalis that literally translates to Somali-I-don't-know and refers to the lack of command of the Somali language exhibited by those who grew up in Kenya). They speak Swahili and English fluently, know Kenya's cultural codes and, despite all the obstacles they faced in the camp, there was a freedom and flexibility in daily life there that they long for in America. For example, they could show up a few minutes late at work without being reprimanded and had time to be with friends and relax after their work day. They also had a reliable social network. Reflecting on the role of clans, 28-year-old Sagal, who now lives in Victoria, British Columbia, where Somalis are rare and thus, clans can only have a limited influence, points out that although they might have been used in a negative way, "clans also meant that you could ask someone for help, they are people you know, people help you because of those links."

Without denying their attachment to Kenya or even Somalia, others nurture no desire to return. For some, such as Samakab, 29, who now resides in Canada, the camp and, by extension, their experience in Kenya have left lasting scars. He says that he has "internalized the encampment" and remains fearful of moving around and feels dislocated, even though he lives in a safe place. Those who left the camp to settle elsewhere in Kenya more commonly speak of their desire to make their home in Somalia than those who moved out of Africa. This may in part relate to their lack of legal status in Kenya, which maintains them in a relatively precarious position, but also to a greater physical and social proximity to Somalia. Hajiro, for example, aspires to return to her parents' country once she completes her master's degree in international relations and diplomacy. She says she wishes to participate in the bettering of Somalia, but also wants to stop being a refugee. "I need to go back and contribute, give back to the community. I want to be part of the peace process and reconstruction. I want to tell them about my experiences, about how it feels to be out of your home country, one where you don't know the culture. At the end of the day, a refugee is always a refugee. Even in the U.K. or the U.S. Even if you have a citizenship, inside, you don't feel you are one of them. You are always a refugee, regardless of your level of education."

The question of belonging is complicated. Those whose families are still in the camp often say that when they think of home, they think of the camp. Yet, they also assume that if their families moved out, they would no longer relate to the camp in the same way. Their parents have often shared memories with them of where they came from. These have been nurtured and created a strong attachment to a country they have never seen. But it remains difficult to call such an imaginary place home. Similarly, countries of adoption are often described in positive terms for the possibility they offer of living a "normal" life, but they hardly feel like home. "It feels terrible not to belong," laments Samakab. "I am not from here. Then, I speak Somali, but that doesn't make me Somali. Nothing links me to my heritage. We lost everything, not only our property, but even the pictures we had. Our whole life was buried. I went to a friend's home a few days ago. She is Oromo [from Ethiopia]. She had a painting from there. I got emotional, thinking that I have nothing from Somalia." Somehow, he hopes that his children will end up putting down roots in Canada: "My daughter is learning Somali, English and French. I want her to feel part of this country. This is where she belongs. I don't want to uproot her. I want her to know she has a heritage, but we are not going back. I tell her about Somalia and Africa. I tell her about nomadism, poems, the beauty of our language."

Before moving to Canada, Samakab went back to Somalia to work, but not to his region of origin. He felt unwelcome, as "people were upset with those coming from other places because they were taking jobs." Had he landed in his region of origin, he believes things might have been different, which seems substantiated by the experience of those who did. Twenty-seven-year-old Absame, for example, moved to Afmadow, Somalia, in 2012, after growing up in Dadaab, studying in Nairobi and living in South Africa. Although he found the country devastated by the civil war and noticed people's strict way of dressing, he also felt at home. "I am in love with Somalia, with that feeling of belonging. Everybody calls me by my father's name, the son of Hassan. It is good." What is common to all is the expressed will to "help Somalia," either by going back there to work and contribute to the reconstruction of the country, or by supporting projects there from abroad. Women, who were often already critical of the conditions of Somali women while they lived in the camp, frequently become more vocal about the issue. A recurring theme in their discourse relates to their desire to fight for the rights of Somali women. Sagal, for example, studied sociology in Victoria, BC, and hopes to enrol in law school and work on the rights of women and refugees in Kenya or Somalia. Ilhaan completed a graduate degree in social work and wants to campaign for the respect of the rights of her peers. Hajiro, who more generally wants to go back to Somalia to “contribute and give back to the community,” intends to fight for girls’ education.

2. Lines of flight

Youth like Amin who were not resettled but returned to Somalia by their own means often consider themselves in a better position than those who were. Unlike those who moved to the U.S., he has secured a good job, has means to support his family and lives among other Somalis. Amin’s path actually epitomizes the fact that although uninviting, the camp can, at times, be described as a land of opportunity. He is not a Somali refugee, but a Kenyan Somali who grew up as a refugee in one of the Dadaab refugee camps, Hagadera, where he was registered as a refugee. He had arrived there in the early 1990s with his family who, pretending to be refugees, moved to the camp out of poverty. There, they would at least have access to food. When his parents left the camp, he stayed behind with relatives who had come from Somalia so he could continue his education. At the end of his secondary school, he realized his grades were not good enough to earn him one of the few university scholarships available. After his uncle living in the Somali capital agreed to support him, he moved to Somalia to study business administration at Mogadishu University. When he finished his degree he went back to Kenya and to the camp, where he worked for an NGO as a refugee worker and was paid a small incentive. While living in Hagadera, he tried to get his Kenyan ID, but never managed to convince the officials that although he was registered as a refugee, he was in fact Kenyan. Given his limited prospects, he started looking for a job in Somalia. He found a respectable and well-paid position with a UN agency and underlines that it is because of the camp that he enjoys such good employment: “If I had started my education in Somalia, I would not be as good as I am today. I value the education I got in the camp. I look at myself as a product of Hagadera." But he also observes that not everybody managed so well and that some of his classmates left Dadaab to join al-Shabab or the Islamic Courts Union.[143]

It is true that those who are resettled tend to describe the process as taxing and unsettling, as recounted by Aziz in the opening of this epilogue. But while most - including those who went to Somalia or settled elsewhere in Kenya – say that the transition to life outside the camp is challenging, all specify that they do not regret the move. Many mention the struggle of having to learn to be financially independent. Arriving in Nairobi, Absame initially felt scared. "It was a big city. Staying in Dadaab was like being in jail and all of a sudden, you are in the sunlight. It was very scary. Even taking a *matatu* [minibus] was scary. You are suddenly on your own." In fact, everything requires major adjustment. When she came to Canada, Sagal found it hard to be away from her family while having to acclimatize to a very different lifestyle. "I had never slept in a room on my own, I had never spent so much time on my own. I could not sleep. I was so afraid. The lack of community life was so difficult. During the first year, I wanted to go back." Yet, both Absame and Sagal gradually reconciled themselves to their new lives and environment, and studied. Warsame talks of coping with his early days in America: "The first three-four months were all about problems. Work is all about productivity here. You are surrounded by machines. In terms of living, it was also difficult. Back home, I had a family. The food was ready when I came back from work. Here, I have to do everything by myself."

Assessing his situation, he talks of his potential success in a way that conjures up the American dream: "I am happy I came here. Here, dreams are valid, they can come true. I never thought I could own my own car. In Kakuma, I could have worked for 30 years and would never have been able to buy a car. Here, you can earn money, you can have two jobs. Regardless of my expectations, this is where I can get a better job. If you are hard working, you can make it." When he was in Kakuma, Warsame insisted that he would study political science in the U.S. A few months after he had arrived there, he called me to discuss whether he should be studying administration and management, rather than political science, as he had been told he would probably have better work prospects. It made perfect sense to him to revise his plans, at least for the near future, as his priority was to support his mother and siblings back in Kenya. Such changes seem relatively common, as young people I spoke with after they had left the camp had often adjusted their ambitions to their new reality.

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[143] In 2009, Human Rights Watch reported that both al-Shabab and recruiters claiming to act on behalf of Somalia's Transnational Federal Government had been recruiting refugees in Dadaab (HRW 2009a). I have not heard such assertions in Kakuma. Kakuma is not Dadaab: its social landscape is different from Dadaab's and it is located at the other end of Kenya, which makes it less accessible to recruiters. This highlights the importance of considering the specificities of the context in assessing such questions. However, some such as Rawlence (Chatham House 2014: 3), have argued that Dadaab's environment is not favourable to radicalization either and have described Dadaab as an "engine for moderation."

As for clan loyalties, those who come from majority groups tend to claim that clan affiliation is no longer a defining characteristic outside the camp. Even those who returned to Somalia concur. However, those from minority groups or who settled in areas where they are in the minority (although they might belong to one of the main clan-families) often say otherwise. This is consistent with Bjork's observation that although clan remains part of people's daily life once in the West, it is not something that they easily admit, as clans seem "antithetical to modernity" (2006: 151). For example, Aden, who is Bajuni, and thus from a minority group, comments on his return to Somalia remarking that "hatred based on tribes is still there. When we come together, people still put their clan forward." Amin, who also moved to Somalia, sees things differently, but argues that this is not related to his belonging to a majority clan: "In Somalia, after 2006, the issue of killing because of clan stopped. It changed to a religious conflict. Someone will be killed for religious reasons. I came when the issue of clan was almost dying."

Conclusion: In a better world

In short, just as youth in the camp described people who had stayed in Somalia as unlucky compared to them, those who have left the camp feel the same towards those who grew up in Somalia, and also to those who are still in the camp. This is logical, considering that in the eyes of young people in Kakuma, the only way to make sense of the camp experience and benefit from it is to keep moving. Many of these young people enjoy living conditions that they deem better than those they had before, even if they often remain in economically unstable conditions. Most are now in a place where they can move and work freely, settle down in total legality and participate in the life of their community. A few have settled temporarily to work or study in particular locations and will most likely move again, but they have no intention of returning to the camp. They find the adaptation to a new setting demanding and miss the social network they had in the camp. Still, once out of the camp, they describe it as an even more forbidding place than they did when living there, although they continue to see it as the setting that allowed them to escape from Somalia’s turmoil.

Conclusion

> I want to live in a palace, not a house, a home which is about three kilometers [wide]. Inside the palace, I want to have 88 doors, excluding the main doors, which are the exit and the entry. More than 900 windows, 200 rooms and two big meetings and resting conference rooms. I want the palace to be near the ocean, because that is where I will get some fresh air. And also, I want two swimming pools, two big gardens, and playing fields for any kind of sports. I want some trees for shade, at least 10 big trees. Water and electricity should be permanent. And at last, I want the palace to be built with milk, not water. And at the entry door, on the upper side, my name should be written. At the exit door, the name of the country, Somalia.
>
> Zahi, 18 years old

I start this final chapter with Zahi's extravagant portrayal of his dream-house set in Somalia because it conveys the hopeful attitude of young Somali refugees in Kakuma and their buoyant way of mocking their situation. Of course, Zahi knows he is unlikely to live in a palace. He is also doubtful he will ever set foot in Somalia. However, like many of the young people I met, he remains relatively light-hearted about his situation and is convinced that although he has always lived in a refugee camp, this stage of his life will soon be over. Still, his irony also conveys a sense of desperation and recognition of the absurdity of being trapped in "indefinite stasis" (Griffiths 2014: 2001).

This might encapsulate this ethnography of the experience of Somali refugee youth who have spent most of their lives in Kakuma. I started this project with the aim of understanding how people who have grown up in camps experience their living environment and how growing up in a camp and in exile, with little or no memory of other places, structures their view of the present, the past and their country of origin, as well as of the future and its possibilities. I was guided by the belief that camps have been adopted as the expected long-term response to displacement because of the will to keep certain populations away from our borders (see

Hyndman [2000], Malkki [1995a] or Nyers [2006]), and wondered about the repercussions of restrictive policies in the daily lives of young refugees. Following Bakewell (2007) and Fresia (2007), I planned to resituate people's trajectories in a broader context extending beyond the humanitarian system. The conviction shared by many authors that refugees display agency in defining their lives and giving meaning to their own situation, even though there are clear limitations and constraints, was intrinsic to this research (e.g., Agier [2008], Chatty [2010], Horst [2006], or Malkki [1995]).

I expected the experience of every individual to be unique, but also to share certain elements with that of other young Somalis who grew up in the same setting (see Chatty [2007]). Based on Hoodfar's (2008) study with Afghan youth and on previous discussions with Somali youth, I envisioned that their perspective would be different from that of their parents who had arrived in Kakuma as adults, and that growing up in a camp would colour their perception of the past, the present and the future. I anticipated that Kakuma would not be a place where they foresaw remaining in the longer term, and I assumed that despite all its limitations, the camp would also be a place where social, political and historical formation and transformation occur, as suggested by Agier (2008), Malkki (1995a) and Nyers (2006). I presumed that the resilience of Somalis, which I had often observed previously, would alter their experience. These various assumptions proved true.

Although I have made many detours in discussing my findings, my observations can be abridged into a few broad statements: regardless of how long it has existed, the camp remains a space of containment, control and transition; young Somalis display agency despite limitations and survive (and sometimes thrive in) adversity, notably by interpreting their experience in a way that makes their present bearable; the refugee camp must be approached as a social world and not only as a non-place (Augé 1992 [1997]); disgruntlement grows when education is over and youth feel they should be establishing themselves as adults, but do not have the social and financial resources to do so. These remarks show the tension that permeates this study and that manifest in a myriad of ways. To some extent, the camp can be a productive and creative place, but that is only true if people eventually manage to leave, since the camp itself constitutes a site of control and confinement, and not of fulfilment and emancipation. Contradictions might also speak of the intricacy of grasping the experience of people growing up in a restrictive space which, while conceived as a rationally organized non-place, ineluctably becomes a messier social world where new practices develop and locality is produced (Appadurai 1996: 192).

I somewhat anticipated these conclusions. Yet, there are a number of important elements that I did not foresee, including the fact that young people rarely questioned being placed in a camp after displacement from their country of origin, nor the existence of the camp itself. They see it as the place that has allowed them to survive and in that respect, the camp can only be understood by considering gains and losses, constraints and opportunities, which is partly why I found it necessary to speak of tensions that pervade the camp experience. Similarly, the extent to which young people saw the camp as a fairly "normal" place when they were children surprised me as, seen from the outside, it appeared to be such an extraordinarily unacceptable place. While I anticipated young people's strong will to leave Kakuma, I did not expect the focus on resettlement to be so overpowering. I knew it was central to people's experience but had not properly grasped its impact on their lives and imagination. Finally, I had not truly appreciated the fact that containment policies not only explain the prevalence of camps as a response to displacement, but also have tangible effects on people's daily lives and social navigation by further restricting their movements.

To conclude, I wish to reflect once more on a few threads that crisscross the preceding pages: people's resilient social navigation; the spatio-temporal relationship between the past, the present and the future; and the need to grasp the inherent contradictions and tensions of being in the camp to capture refugees' experience there. I will also discuss the limits of this study and consider complementary research paths.

1. Social navigation in a refugee camp

The camp is an inappropriate response to displacement that may fit the needs of donor countries and host countries by keeping populations deemed undesirable or dangerous (or both) at the margins, but certainly does not fit the needs of refugees nor respect their rights. This observation runs through this thesis, as it is the backdrop against which young people's lives are formed and lived (see introductory chapter, section 1). Jansen (2011) argues that the camp might not be a worse environment than a poor and geographically isolated city in a poor country. Similarly, having limited access to higher education or salaried jobs, or struggling to establish oneself as an adult is not peculiar to young people growing up in camps. It is the reality of numerous children in contemporary Africa, as I have noted several times in earlier chapters. This suggests that we should avoid considering displacement as the explanation for all issues around refugee camps (see Bakewell 2007: 8 and Honwana and De Boeck 2005: 9). At the same time, the camp is set up by the international community and host countries as a response to the arrival of refugees, which distinguishes it from an unplanned sprawling urban area. As Hyndman observes, "the discrepancy between a language of rights and the conditions of the camp is untenable" (1996: 285). Deliberately settling people for the long term in such settings entails becoming blind to their humanity, not seeing them as fellow humans. This brings us back to Arendt and her observations on refugees having fallen out of the human race merely by the fact of being non-citizens (1951 [1968]: 296-300).

The structural violence of the camp deeply affects people's daily reality and, to some extent, limits their expectations. Yet, people are not reduced to mere survival or turned into perfectly manageable bodies. Hence the importance of looking both at the small scale and the broader context, so as to take into account the impact of encampment and restrictive policies; in the same vein, we see that global connectedness does not only generate frustration, it can open up new avenues and nurture hope. Somali youth navigate the camp and its (relatively sparse) opportunities, acting as social agents. Vigh's (2006: 13-15) concept of social navigation is useful in recognizing the complexity of people's experience by getting around the dichotomy between people as victims or agents, and in expressing people's agency, while acknowledging that constraints and policies affect their social navigation, and thus their present and future possibilities. Some are more successful navigators than others, which shows that the refugee population is heterogeneous, like any human collectivity. It is made up of individuals who might share parts of their history or memories, and a specific social, political or historical context, but who also possess their own characteristics, history and subjectivity (Chatty 2010: 236; Colson 1999: 23, 37; Essed 2004: 2). Thus, there is no ideal-type refugee or refugee navigation, regardless of common humanitarian and media representations that obliterate their individuality (Malkki 1995a: 495, 511). Still, we can also find similarities in people's navigation. For example, as observed elsewhere, young men tend to fare better than their female counterparts, earning more scholarships and holding more jobs or leadership positions (Chatty 2007: 274-76). But this might be more related to socio-structural inequity, or to social forces that influence people's social navigation, than to the camp environment itself.

Ways of navigating, which could also be called coping mechanisms, are anchored in people's culture as well as in their personal and collective history. There are obvious similarities between the ways used by Somali youth and those of the Palestinians and Sahrawis studied by Chatty et al. (see 2005 and 2010a).[144] As a way of transcending their condition, education, further migration and transnational networks are important to all of them (Chatty 2010a: 29). But while young Palestinians might turn to political activism "to make sense of their surroundings as well as expend their energy and release their sense of political and social frustration" (Chatty 2010: 336), such mobilization is not manifest among the Somali youth in Kakuma. They appear to avoid being too vocal, perhaps given Kenya's manifest fatigue around playing host. In fact, although there are obvious similarities among the experiences of refugee youth growing up in camps in different settings, their experience is also particular, as it is structured by specific social, cultural, historical and political contexts, and individual characteristics (Bakewell 2007: 11; Chatty 2010: 336).

2. The fluid relationship between past, present and future

The chronological sequencing of this study is meant to allow the reader to recognize the close connection and interaction between people's lived present, (imagined) past and envisioned future. While some themes might show up repeatedly (e.g., the continuing violence in Somalia, the focus on leaving the camp), such an approach also helps make sense of people's personal experience, which is structured by both the raw and unmediated sensory experience and its reflective and retrospective analysis (Throop 2003). The experience of the camp itself is often ambiguous, and difficult to label, as it not only contains negative and positive aspects, while remaining complex, nuanced and filled with very human contradictions.

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[144] I am not considering the experience of Afghans also studied by Chatty et al., as they did not live in camps.

Young Somalis' narratives convey contradictory views of the camp. On the one hand, it is depicted as unliveable, hot, and fraught with danger and uncertainty. The contempt that the humanitarian system displays towards refugees is described with a great deal of resentment. On the other hand, the camp is portrayed as the place that has allowed refugees to survive and develop. Those conflicting views can, to some extent, be associated with people's temporal perspective. The way they recall and shape their family's past (and have vivid indirect recollections or "postmemories" [Hirsh 1998; see Chap. 2, 3.1]) and the story of their arrival in Kakuma make the present tolerable. Talking of the past, youth repeatedly stress that their lives in Somalia would have been wasted and that their conditions in the camp have significantly improved over the years. Hence they feel their present circumstances are better than they would have been in another context or a decade ago in the same location. The past as a resource for one's identification and identity (Baussant 2007) has not been undermined by exile, but the story of this past has been revisited. This somehow alters the reproduction of social life, a reproduction that "is always a matter of recurring 'loss' and 'recovery' of selective transmission and reconstructed history in changing circumstances" (Clifford 2007: 204, evoking James Weiner 2002). In the present, refugees live and "produce locality," as people are born, marry and have children in the camp (Appadurai 1996: 192). Narratives opening onto the future have a different orientation: they highlight Kakuma's difficulties and lack of possibilities, possibly because it is not a setting where Somali youth want to imagine their future. Their knowledge of the world and its possibilities fuels their discontentment and the impression that they must leave Kakuma to lead an acceptable life.

Young people's unsettledness in Kenya and their lack of physical connection with the Somali territory complicate their sense of identification. They feel they belong to both Kenya and Somalia, while also feeling alien to both places. Much as they may feel at home in Kenya, they are also aware that they are unwelcome guests. Much as they may have a sense of being Somali, they also fear Somalia, do not know it and are not even sure they would be welcome there. This feeds into their sense of living in an eternal state of limbo. It might also explain some of the contradictions that young refugees express regarding their fantasy and socially expected desire to discover Somalia versus their great ambivalence toward the idea of "returning" to a foreign land.

It is worth noting that multiple and conflicting identifications, and contradictory views about returning, have been observed by Chatty writing about Palestinian, Afghan and Sahrawi refugee youth (2007: 272-74). In fact, there are many similarities between the experience of young Somalis and that of youth in other settings. However, particularities are also observable not only with respect to refugees of other origins, but also refugees of the same origin growing up in a different context. For example, Somali youth growing up in Dadaab were not exposed to the same cultural diversity as were those in Kakuma. This would certainly make their experience somewhat different.

3. The camp as a place of tensions and contradictions

Throughout this thesis, some seemingly contradictory observations emerge, more as tensions than binary oppositions, regarding the experience of the camp. These tensions are intrinsically connected, as they often originate from the refugees' response to environmental constraints. They also reflect the fact that refugees live beyond institutions and despite institutional limitations.

Although the camp seems cut off, its embeddedness with the rest of the country and the world is evident, which conjures up the compression of time and space evoked by Bauman (1998: 121). People come and go, send money and news; the mass media bring the world into the camp every day; political decisions, sometimes made on the other side of the globe, deeply affect the fate and lives of refugees. Social, political and economic realities transcend locality, as refugees are well informed of people's living conditions in a variety of places, which plays a role in shaping their experience and reinforces resentment at being trapped in a camp: imagined possibilities are endless, but real life is full of restrictions.

This constant interaction also turns the camp into a space in motion. Kakuma becomes a long, difficult stop on a dreamed-of journey from Somalia to the West, ideally materialized by means of resettlement. Hopes of resettlement can create intense restlessness because of the unpredictability and lengthiness of the process, but also provide a real or imagined way out. This may help to nurture optimism and subdue despair, at least for a period of time. Young people express little desire to live in Somalia, although several maintain that, in an ideal world, a person should reside in his or her country of origin. The camp is a stage of development and is manageable when considered as a part of a broader trajectory, an idea also nurtured by the Somali tradition of mobility (see Horst 2006; Kleist 2004; Rousseau et al. 1998). Still, the camp is also inexorably local and immobile, as refugees are theoretically constrained to a place that does not offer an acceptable life. Such immobility impels movement.

Immobility and mobility can also refer to the conflicting temporalities that overlap, interact and, at times, clash in Kakuma. The endless wait for a hypothetical departure turns the camp into a locale where time is suspended and unpredictable. But that same time speeds up remarkably when resettlement is announced. And while biological time passes, social time gives the impression of grinding to a halt once education is over and all avenues are blocked, making the transition to adulthood challenging. The temporary yet permanent nature of Kakuma also creates a temporal tension. The camp has been there for more than twenty years, a lapse of time than can hardy be described as ephemeral, but the idea of transiency surfaces in people's perceptions and from the limited sense of community between the various ethnic groups who cohabit in Kakuma. Although they have been coexisting in a generally convivial manner for a long time, they have not developed stronger bonds in part because the camp was and continues to be a passage or, to some extent and in Augé's term (1992 [1997]), a "non-place," even when the passage is endless. In the absence of resettlement, young people sometimes decide to take significant risks to end their immobility and instigate movement. They may try to reach a country where they hope to find a better life or move to an urban area in Kenya. If some stay in the camp, it is rarely the result of a decision, but rather due to the impossibility of finding a socially acceptable and sufficiently safe solution. This is especially the case for women.

The camp can be described as a land of constraints, marked by its arbitrary power and the humanitarian system's will to contain and order populations (Hyndman 2000; Nyers 2006). It can also be considered a restrictive land of transformation, as it gives access to education and hypothetical resettlement, and exposes residents to cultural diversity and to the wider world. To the victim label, refugees oppose the idea that being refugees has made them better and stronger. Most have not stopped believing in their capacities and ambitions, although they feel that the design of their future is partly beyond their reach. It is interesting to note that those who know they will not be resettled might feel that all hope of finding a decent exit is lost, while others simply refuse to assimilate the information. Yet for some, this rejection has an emancipating aspect, as they now assume responsibility for their future, although options are limited. Young people's experiences make them question cultural practices and social roles. Women assert themselves in a way they believe would have been impossible in Somalia, which brings to mind Malkki's observation that "the camp [hosting Burundian refugees in Tanzania] ended up being much more than a device of containment and enclosure; it grew into a locus of continual creative subversion and transformation" (1995: 237). The camp becomes a place of emergence of a new social formation, a space of individual and collective social and political transformation, one that prompts further physical and symbolic movement. In such a setting, people may share their refugeeness, but they cannot be reduced to their refugeeness. In any case, to benefit from the knowledge and skills acquired in the camp, and to fulfil their responsibilities towards their parents, young Somalis must leave. Moreover, as moving out of the camp is collectively depicted as the expected path, inability to do so is most commonly experienced as failure.

4. Limitations, further research and considerations

As is the case for most ethnographies, my observations are based on social interactions with a relatively small group of people. I believe their experience is illustrative of that of a greater number of people in a similar situation, which can to some extent be verified in writings about other camps or other groups of refugees in Kakuma (e.g., Chatty [2010] on Palestinian youth, Kamal [2010] on young Afghan refugees and Grabska [2010] on South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma). I am nonetheless certain that nuances and disparities can be noticed, as one finds in Chatty's article (2007) advocating for comparative anthropological research on refugee youth. In addition, there are realities and aspects of people's reality that must have escaped me, in part because there are many people I did not speak to and also because of the limitations of language and the incommunicable nature of parts of people's intimate experience that might, however, have a great impact on their lives. In that sense, this can only be a partial and imperfect translation of people’s lived experience. Moreover, being among the lucky ones who can move freely across the globe – “tourists” in the terminology of Bauman (1998: 88-92) – probably makes it difficult to truly grasp the reality of those who are stuck in one place.

There are elements I could have considered more closely that might have added to the depth of this research. I could have paid more attention to the role played by young people’s Islamic faith in coping with adversity (cf. Chatty 2010: 336). Youth repeatedly stressed that they were in the camp because of God’s will and therefore could not too strongly disagree with their situation or question their fate, because, in Omar’s words, “you cannot choose where God has planted you.” This does not prevent them from searching for a way out, but appears to attenuate their discontentment, or at least, its expression, even though there are episodes of despair. Comparing the experience of Somalis with that of South Sudanese youth in Kakuma could also have been fruitful, by revealing to what extent these overlap and identifying areas of deviation. I could also have further explored the transnational relations of Somali refugees with people in Somalia. I am not in a position to assess whether young people who have regular contacts with Somalis in Somalia feel more connected to the country and are more likely to consider returning there or to want to move on further to support their relatives in Somalia. Still, this bond, this personal link, could have a crucial role to play in that respect.

Research beyond this thesis could be extended in various directions. The experience of the third generation born in Kenyan camps could be the object of a study. It is likely that their interpretation of their grandparents’ history of flight and of the Somali conflict would be even more succinct than the one told by their parents, even if these events still define their lives to a considerable extent and explain their presence in a camp. It would also be telling to undertake a longitudinal study over decades, as it would allow a better understanding of people’s trajectories and those of their families. The ways in which youth who have spent most of their lives in a camp integrate in another setting, either in their home country or outside of the camps, would also be interesting to explore. For example, it would be worth studying the differences in cultural identity between those who stayed in Somalia and those who returned after decades in exile. Further research on life on the margins in Kenyan cities would be equally relevant, as would focusing on the integration in a Western country of refugees who have spent their childhood in a camp. While the experience of the camp has been described as inimical to educational, professional, social and economical integration in Western countries (Pittaway et al. 2009: 144-45; Pressé and Thomson 2008: 97-98; Wilkinson 2002), one wonders whether growing up in a culturally diversified setting such as Kakuma helps with social integration in other cities. On a broader level, refugee camps could be likened to the stigmatized neighbourhoods described by Bourdieu (1993: 167):

> [L]e quartier stigmatisé dégrade symboliquement ceux qui l'habitent, et qui, en retour, le dégradent symboliquement puisque, étant privés de tous les atouts nécessaires pour participer aux différents jeux sociaux, ils n'ont en partage que leur commune excommunication. Le rassemblement en un même lieu d'une population homogène dans la dépossession a aussi pour effet de redoubler la dépossession, notamment en matière de culture et de pratique culturelle: les pressions exercées, à l'échelle de la classe ou de l'établissement scolaire ou l'échelle de la cité, par les plus démunis ou les plus éloignés des exigences constitutives de l'existence “normale” produisent un effet d'entraînement vers le bas, donc de nivellement et ne laissent d'autre issue que la fuite (le plus souvent interdite par le manque de ressource) vers d'autres lieux.

For Bourdieu, the only acceptable solution is departure from the stigmatized neighbourhood. This is equally true for the camp, although there is an important difference, one that I have mentioned many times. While the camp is a restrictive environment, it gives access to basic education and, potentially, to resettlement, thus there might be more hope.[145] It would be interesting to compare the two environments and the paths of people who have grown up in such settings.[146]

The last few points might be threads for reflection rather than research. Refugees are often treated as a radically unique category and thus, the literature on migration in its broader sense has not always been considered relevant to refugee studies. Yet, notions developed in the literature on interethnic cohabitation in urban areas or on the ethnic identity of migrants, such as conviviality (Gilroy 2006) or the multiplicity of people’s belongings (Meintel 2008: 312-

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[145] Given the growing interest in issues of radicalization and the (often simplistic) assumption that low-income neighbourhoods are fertile grounds for radicalization, one might wonder whether camps are propitious for the adoption of extreme political or religious positions. I tend to believe that Kakuma is more conducive to moderation than radicalization, as young people growing up there have long been exposed to a human rights and peace promotion discourse, and have proudly learned to live with cultural diversity. In addition, the fact that many belong to minority groups seems to make their return to Somalia to fight for a radical group even more improbable, as they feel they are somehow excluded from the “real” Somali population. Of course, I could be proven wrong.

[146] Comparisons with other figuratively or literally enclosed communities, such as prisoners or island communities, could yield interesting results, as the focus on finding a way out or emigrating might be common.

13; Oriol 1985: 172-76), are useful to make sense of the experience of refugees in Kakuma, in part because of the camp's urban size and cultural diversity, and most likely in other long-lasting and sizeable camps.

I started this project because I was uncomfortable with the inhumane humanitarian response to protracted displacement and hoped to clarify how practices and policies manifested themselves in the real life of a specific group of people. The experience of those I met in Kakuma reinforces my conviction that a refugee camp cannot be a solution to displacement, even when presented as a temporary measure. Given that camps have been the subject of severe criticism, including by the very same organizations that are involved in setting them up, it is difficult to understand why they are still being established by these same organizations and will, in all likelihood, continue to exist indefinitely. The inertia of humanitarian policies and organizations in this regard is disconcerting, and so is the patent inconsistency between theory and practice – UNHCR's recent commitment to pursue alternatives to camps whenever possible is however a welcome, and overdue, shift in the agency's formal approach. The 2014 *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* will hopefully turn out to be more than aspirational and lead to tangible changes. I have repeatedly shown throughout this ethnography that refugees cannot be reduced to voiceless victims. This should be recognized in discussions on solutions to displacement, as people can and already do actively contribute to finding solutions for themselves, sometimes in very creative ways, as I illustrated in the "note on life after the camp." To some extent, the people quoted there, who are able to stay in touch virtually, are among the privileged, the literate ones, and thus cannot be considered as exemplary of all refugees in camps. Still, they may be representative of a fair number of young people who have grown up, studied and gained work experience in camps. While many of them have been resettled to Western countries through official channels, several have found a resolution to their exile by themselves. In-depth research on people's trajectories after the camp would be worth undertaking, and could usefully inform discussions on solutions to displacement. Even though facilitating labour or educational mobility or settlement in urban areas might not be the answer for the whole of a camp population, these could be pertinent for smaller numbers of refugees, especially youth who are likely to be able to adapt fairly successfully to a new setting and contribute to their host community or to their country of origin. Thus – and this is no novelty – solutions to displacement must be context-specific and suited to people's skills, aptitudes, experiences and interests.

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Appendix 1: A short overview of key informants

During my research, I conducted over a hundred interviews and all of them contributed in one way or another to shaping my perception. For this reason, the following overview of key informants can only be partial. It focuses on individuals who are repeatedly quoted in this ethnography and draws attention to some significant relationships between people. In general, when I introduce a new character in the thesis, I explain who the person is. Except as noted, the individuals listed below are Somalis from Somalia.

As in the rest of the thesis, names have been changed to preserve people's anonymity.

Outspoken **Khadra,** 20, lived with her two parents and siblings in the old Somali neighbourhood of Kakuma I. She arrived in Kenya in 1992 from Kismayo, Somalia, when she was a few months old. Her family moved to Kakuma in 1997. Prior to that, she lived in two coastal camps, Utange and Swale Nguru. She has completed her secondary education and worked for an NGO. *She was resettled to the U.S. on her own while I was in the camp.*

Khadra introduced me to **Xaawo**, 21. She has lived with her uncle and grandmother in the old Somali neighbourhood of Kakuma since 1995, as her parents died in Somalia. She arrived in Kenya from Kismayo as a baby and first stayed in Marafa camp, on the Kenyan coast. She claims to be among the Somalis who have been in the camp from the longest. Her family has been rejected for resettlement, which brings a lot of distress to Xaawo's life. She has completed secondary school and is unemployed.

The Nuur family: Zaynab, 18, **Awo**, 21, **Aziz**, 23, and **Fartuun**, 26, are siblings who arrived in Kakuma with their parents and two older brothers in 1998. Their family left Baidoa, Somalia, in 1995. The family was relatively wealthy and stayed in Nairobi until they had exhausted their resources. It is an exceptional family, in that all the children have completed their secondary education and most have held prestigious positions with NGOs. All the children still lived with their parents in a relatively mixed neighbourhood of Kakuma II. I first met Zaynab and gradually came to know the rest of the family. *The whole family was resettled in the U.S. after I left the camp, except for Awo who studies in Canada.*

Ayan, 18, and **Deeqa**, 21, are two friends who both arrived in Kenya in 1992 and in Kakuma in 1997, after living in Hatimy camp, also on the Kenyan coast. I met with them through Aziz, as they were enrolled in a filmmaking class he was instructing. Both have completed their primary schooling. Deeqa did not go to secondary school, while Ayan started but dropped out to help her mother at home. Ayan's father works in Nairobi to support the family in the camp.

Khadra also introduced me to **Faarax**, 21, who arrived in Kenya from Kismayo in 1992 and first lived in Jomvu camp, along with many other Somali Bajuni. His family was transferred to Kakuma in 1998 and settled in the Bajuni area, in Kakuma II, but later moved to the old Somali neighbourhood of Kakuma I. He lived with his mother and younger siblings who were still in school. Their father had been resettled to the United States with his other wife several years previously. Faarax had completed secondary school and worked for an NGO, until he decided to leave for Nairobi. *The whole family was resettled to the U.S. after I had left Kakuma.*

Mahdi, 21, arrived in Kakuma from Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1992 when he was a few months old. Known as a peacemaker among his peers, he has been in Kakuma for the longest period among the Somalis whom I met. He lived in the old Somali neighbourhood of Kakuma I with his mother, siblings and stepfather. He has completed primary school, but did not study further. He desperately searched for a job, but could not find one. He was enrolled in the journalism class that I gave. *Mahdi left for Nairobi with Faarax while I was in the camp and is still there.*

The Ahmed family: I met with **Nuradin**, 21, **Warsame**, 23, and **Luula**, 18, in different contexts and only realized they were siblings later. Nuradin was in the journalism class, an aid worker introduced me to Warsame and Luula attended my photography class. Their family arrived in Kenya in 1991 from Mogadishu and first lived in three of the coastal camps. They were transferred to Kakuma in 1997. Warsame was the chairman of one of the Somali youth groups and worked as a youth mobilizer. Nuradin looked after the small family shop in one of the markets in the camp. He had completed his secondary education and was enrolled in a long distance university course. Luula was in high school and was one of my photography students. They lived with their mother and younger siblings. *Warsame and Nuradin were resettled to Ohio, U.S., after I left the camp. Their mother and other siblings are still in Kenya, but moved to Nairobi with the financial support of the two brothers.*

I met Mahdi and Nuradin through the journalism class that I gave. They turned out to be Faraax's close childhood friends.

Faarax introduced me to **Dayib**, 33, the elected leader of his neighbourhood who briefly stayed in Dadaab and Nairobi before arriving in Kakuma in 2003. Dayib introduced me to several adults and elderly people who had been in the camp for long periods of time. He works for an NGO.

Faarax also introduced me to **Idris**, 40, who has been displaced for most of his life. He is a Somali from the Ogaden, in Ethiopia. He was five years old when, in 1978, his parents fled the Ogaden to Hargeisa, in northwestern Somalia (Somaliland). He grew up in a refugee camp there. In 1988, when he was 15, the Somali government attacked the city and people fled en masse. In the process, he was separated from his parents. He went to Mogadishu and never saw his parents again. When the situation deteriorated in Mogadishu, he hit the road once more. In 1991, he crossed the Kenyan border and arrived in Liboi. He was transferred to Dadaab, but was sent to a boarding school in Garissa. When he finished his secondary education, he was transferred to one of the coastal camps. When that camp closed in 1997, he moved to Kakuma. He works for an NGO.

Warsame introduced me to **Osman**, a 52-year-old Somali lawyer from Mogadishu who first lived in Dadaab and moved to Kakuma I in 2010. He studied law in Somalia and later in Switzerland and Italy. When the regime collapsed in Somalia, he fled to Ethiopia where he worked as a judge. He moved to Kenya as he was told that he could be resettled. This did not materialize and he ended up in the camp, with his wife and six children. He has no paid work.

Abdikadir, 31, arrived on the Kenyan coast from Kismayo in 1993 and first lived in Jomvu camp. He moved to Kakuma with his parents in 1998 and lived in the Bajuni neighbourhood of Kakuma II. He has finished his secondary school and is enrolled in a long-distance-learning university programme. He is married and has young children. He worked for an NGO. *Abdikadir was resettled to the U.S. in 2013.*

Zahara, 23, came to Kenya with her older sister in 1993. Their parents had died. The sisters lived in Jomvu camp until 1997, when they were transferred to Kakuma. They did not stay in Kakuma, as they found the conditions too difficult. They settled in Mombasa, where Zahara's sister died. At that point, Zahara decided to return to Somalia where her grandmother still lived, but she soon left again. She stayed with a family on the Kenyan coast for a few years while she completed her secondary schooling. Then, jobless and without resources, she moved to Kakuma. She works for an NGO.

Abdullahi, 24, arrived in Kenya from Buale in 1991 and first lived in Dadaab. He was transferred to Kakuma in 2002, as part of the resettlement of Somali Bantus to the U.S. His family was rejected from the process and thus ended up staying in Kakuma. He lives with his elderly mother, siblings and wife in the Bantu neighbourhood of Kakuma IV. He resigned from his job with an NGO while I was in Kakuma.

Abdullahi introduced me to **Yasin**, 28, who also lives in the Bantu area, although he is not Bantu. Yasin arrived in Kenya from Sako in 1991 and stayed in Dadaab. He "resettled" himself to Kakuma in 2010, after completing high school, as he believed that business opportunities were better there. He is self-employed.

Mulki, 21, grew up in Dadaab. She was transferred to Kakuma in 2010 because she was deemed to be unsafe in Dadaab, as the family of her former husband (who had left for Somalia with their three children) was threatening her. She completed her primary schooling, but could continue her studies as she was married. She does not have a job.

Appendix 2: Statistics on youth in Kakuma

	Pop. by year of birth			**Born in Kakuma**				**Arrived before the age of 6**			
Year	**All**	**SOM**	**% Som.**	**All**	**SOM**	**% Som.**	**% Som. Pop.**	**All**	**SOM**	**% Som.**	**% Som. Pop.**
1987	1592	953	59,86	NA	NA	NA	NA	151	105	69,54	11,02
1988	1892	1272	67,23	NA	NA	NA	NA	218	162	74,31	12,74
1989	1827	1325	72,52	NA	NA	NA	NA	236	169	71,61	12,75
1990	2132	1486	69,7	NA	NA	NA	NA	295	181	61,36	12,18
1991	2201	1557	70,74	NA	NA	NA	NA	323	169	52,32	10,85
1992	2440	1290	52,87	38	2	5,26	0,16	342	161	47,08	12,48
1993	2068	1161	56,14	90	0	0	0	311	110	35,37	9,47
1994	2004	927	46,26	155	3	1,94	0,32	421	140	33,25	15,1
1995	2114	1062	50,24	193	3	1,55	0,28	491	165	33,6	15,54
1996	2283	1184	51,86	172	12	6,98	1,01	492	167	33,94	14,1
1997	2465	1153	46,77	238	39	16,39	3,38	681	254	37,3	22,03
Total	**23018**	**13370**	**58,08**	**886**	**59**	**6,66**	**0,44**	**3961**	**1783**	**45,01**	**13,34**

Source: Statistics compiled by UNHCR Kakuma, upon request, 12 March 2013.

Appendix 3: Summary of interviews

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS						
	Youth	**Parents**	**Other adults**	**Gvt/NGO/UN**	**Post-camp**	**Total**
M	29	10	13	12	7	**71**
F	29	7	2	3	3	**44**
Total	**58**	**17**	**15**	**15**	**10**	**115**

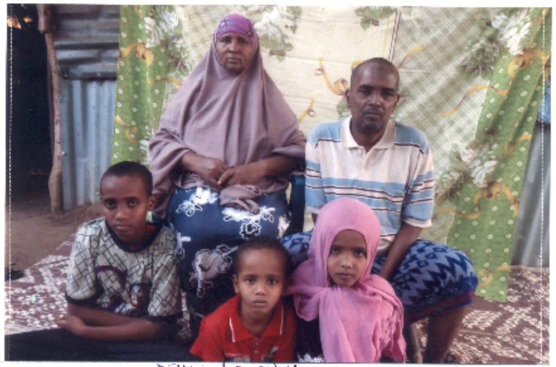
INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH LIVING IN KAKUMA																
Age	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**31**	**32**	**Total**
M	-	5	3	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	-	2	-		1	1	**29**
F	4	4	3	4	6	1	2	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	**29**
Total	**4**	**9**	**6**	**8**	**8**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**0**	**2**	**-**		**1**	**1**	**58**

Nationality	F	M	T	%
Somali	20	21	**41**	**71**
South Sudanese	7	5	**12**	**21**
Ethiopian	-	2	**2**	**3**
Congolese	2	-	**2**	**3**
Rwandese	-	1	**1**	**2**
Total	**29**	**29**	**58**	

Year of arrival Somali youth										
	Born KK	**91**	**92**	**93**	**94**	**95**	**96**	**97**	**98-99**	**post-99**	**Total**
M	4	5	6	1	0	1	1		-	3	**21**
F	8	2	3	1	0	3	-	1	-	2	**20**
T	**12**	**7**	**9**	**2**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**-**	**5**	**41**

Appendix 4: Selected photographs and texts by students

Home Sweet Home or family portraits

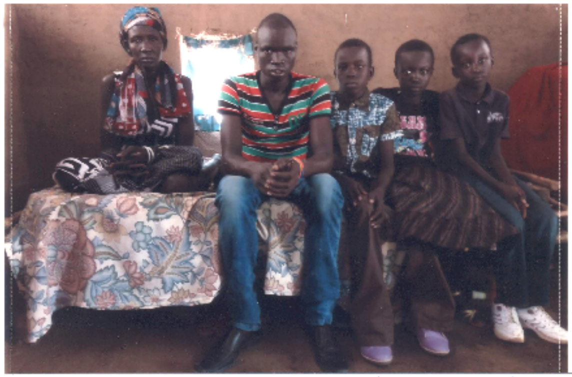


My family:

I have two brothers and one sister.

I have a father and mother. my mother and father loves us. and I would like them because. my parents are caring us..

And we are happy family because we ~~are~~ love each other and we are supporting each other and we are living together, my brothers and my sister eating together. we are playing together and same time we are studing to gether I like my family.



I do love my family very much. I do respect them all my father, mother and all the members in my family brothers and my sister they live in peace and they respect each other.

I do use to take my family photo in future to remember them when I have gone any where.

I do write this test in future to remember my family even though my father is not among them now I do remember him very well and I do appreciate them for what they shows to me like education and how they took care for my family in the time of Clashes / Wars in Sudan even though my father is dead we are the one who will cooperate together as a family and see what will going to benefit our family because there is time for every one every body have a time to do what is right to him/her.

Others family are the one who are against my family like my Uncle is against my family because the time my father died he decide to take us to Sudan but my mother said to him no! why to take my family to Sudan he said there is no body who will take care for family so my mother said to him the country is still in clashes now there is no reason for the family to be in Sudan the is also in so they have not understand each other so he decide that to kill mother.

So I realy appreciate for my mother for that because it was appromise to my father that education is best for you and these is the reason why my mother refuse us for us to want there.

Home Sweet Home or students' home and home of their dreams

I want to live in a palace not a house or a home which is about 3 Kilometres. Inside the palace I want to have 88 doors excluding the main doors which are the exit & the entry more than 900 windows, 200 rooms and two big meeting ~~Confere and~~ resting conference I want the palace to be near the ocean coz I want some fresh air 2 big swimming pools 2 gardens and playing fields be it be any kind of sports.

water and electricity should be permanent mean always there. I also want the palace to be built with milk not water. I aslo want 5 offices inside my palace and the entry door I mean the uperside of the door I want my name to be there and the exit door the name of the Country Somalia

the palace must be decorated with all types of decoration and also the guards must wear clothes which are matching the the Colour of the palace.

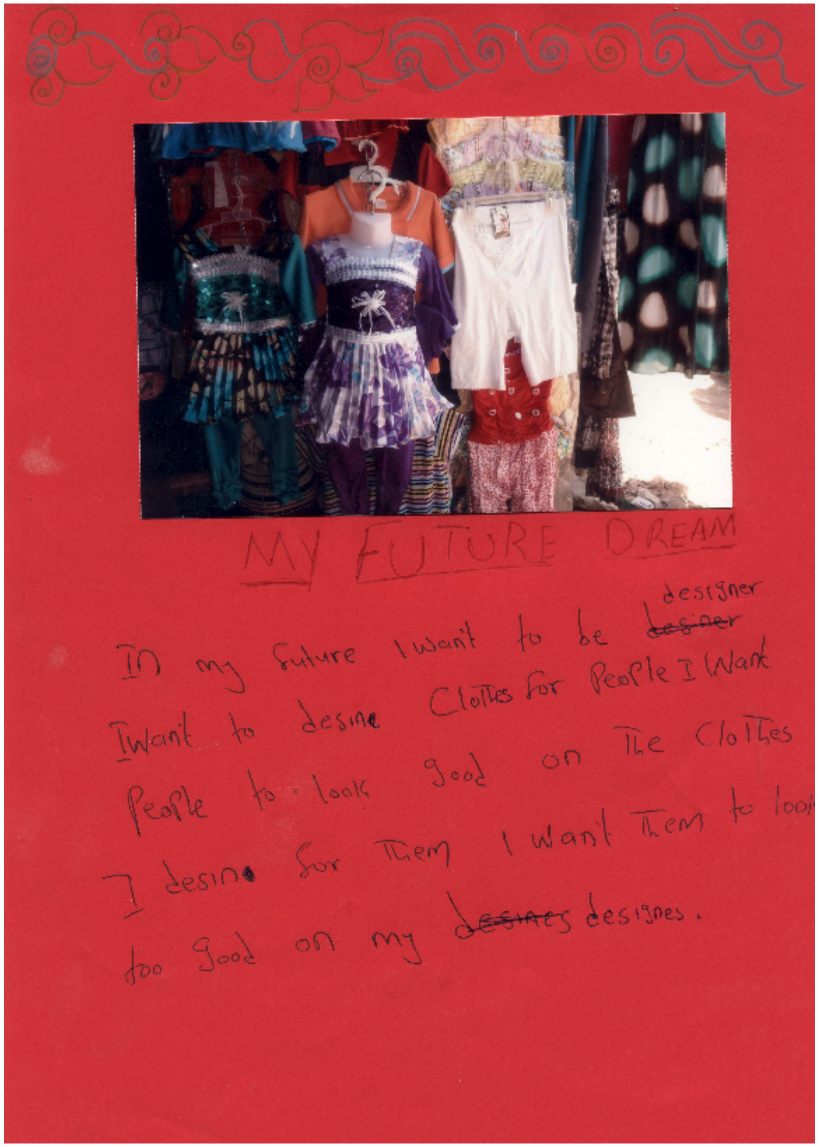
My DREAM HOME.

I have a dream that tomorrow my home will be of no Comparision a home with electricity, water inside Video and fan. I dream of a big home where I can dwell in With out any interuption.

I dream a home with fridgator and fresh toilets a home with high hygien without dust that may cause any discomfort to my health.

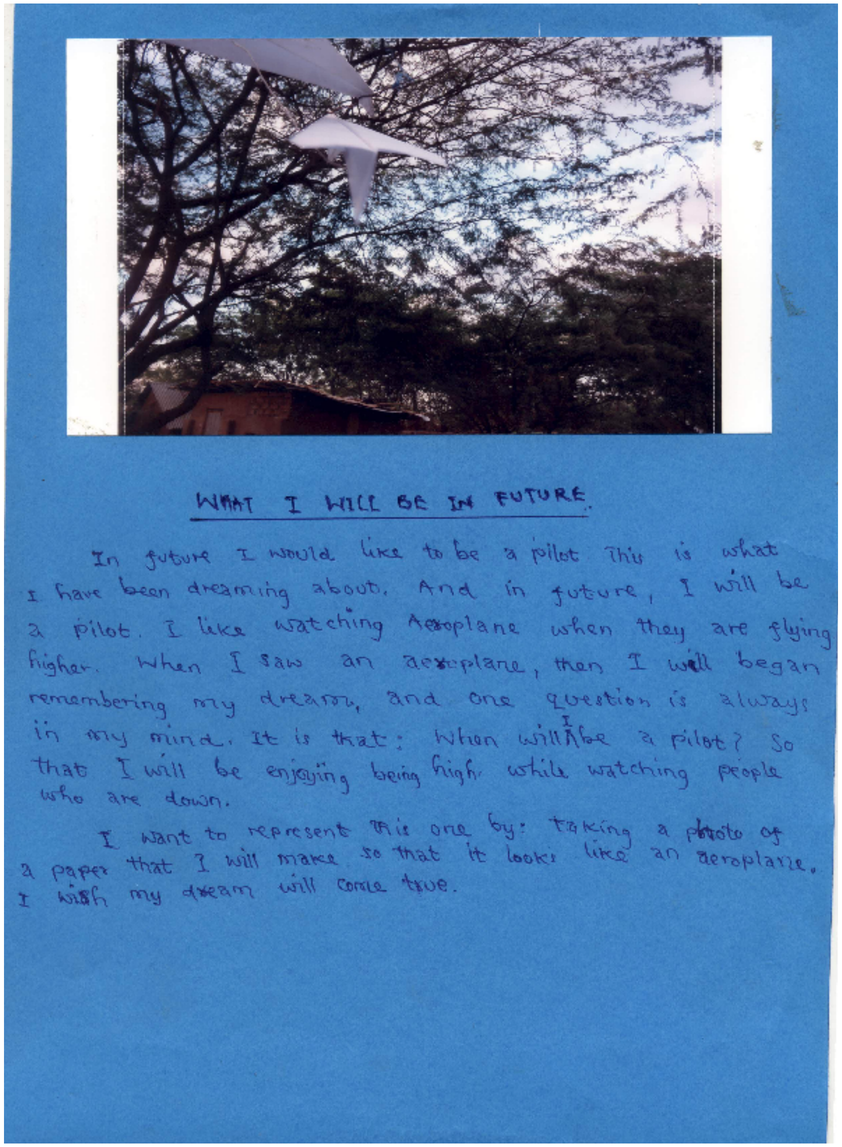
and above all a home of Peace not Sorrows.

Life is what we make it or students’ ambitions for the future



MY FUTURE DREAM

In my future I want to be ~~desiner~~ designer
I want to desine Clothes for People I Want
People to look good on The Clothes
I desine for Them I want Them to loo
too good on my ~~desines~~ designes.

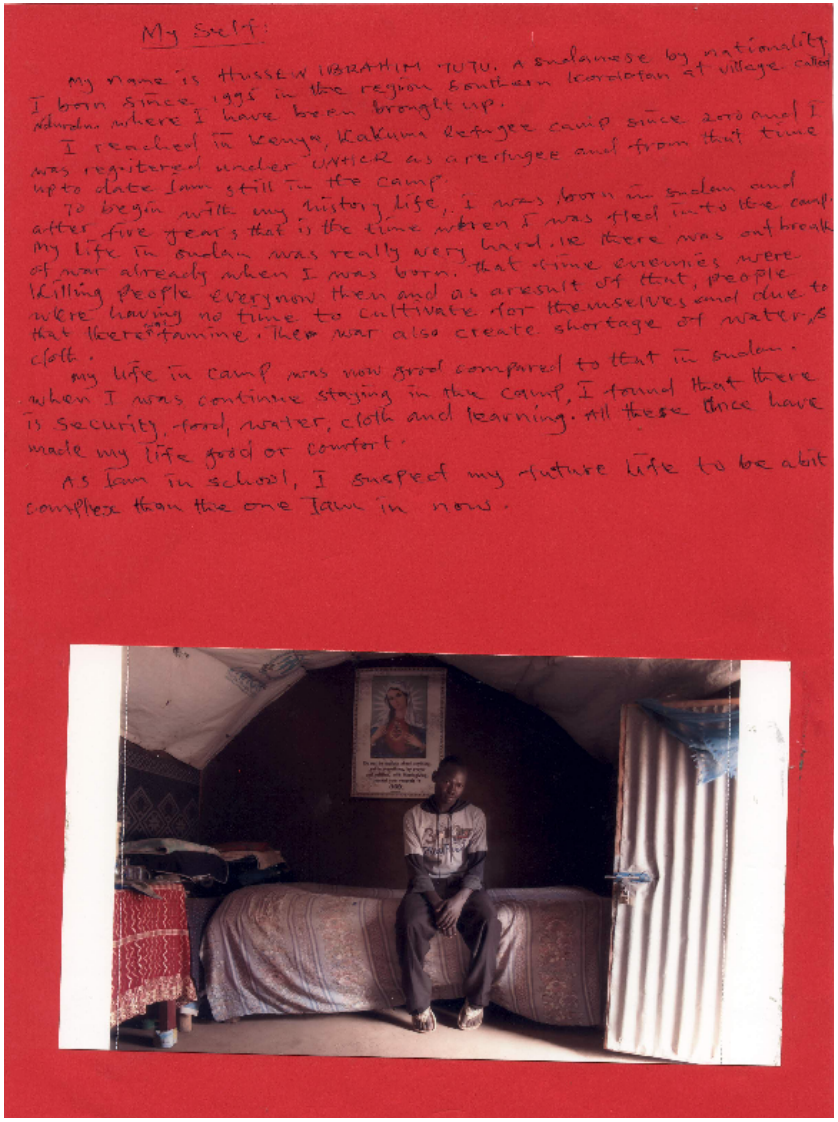


WHAT I WILL BE IN FUTURE.

In future I would like to be a pilot This is what I have been dreaming about. And in future, I will be a pilot. I like watching Aeroplane when they are flying higher. When I saw an aeroplane, then I will began remembering my dream, and one question is always in my mind. It is that: When will I be a pilot? So that I will be enjoying being high while watching people who are down.

I want to represent this one by: taking a photo of a paper that I will make so that it looks like an aeroplane. I wish my dream will come true.

Us or self-portraits



My Self:

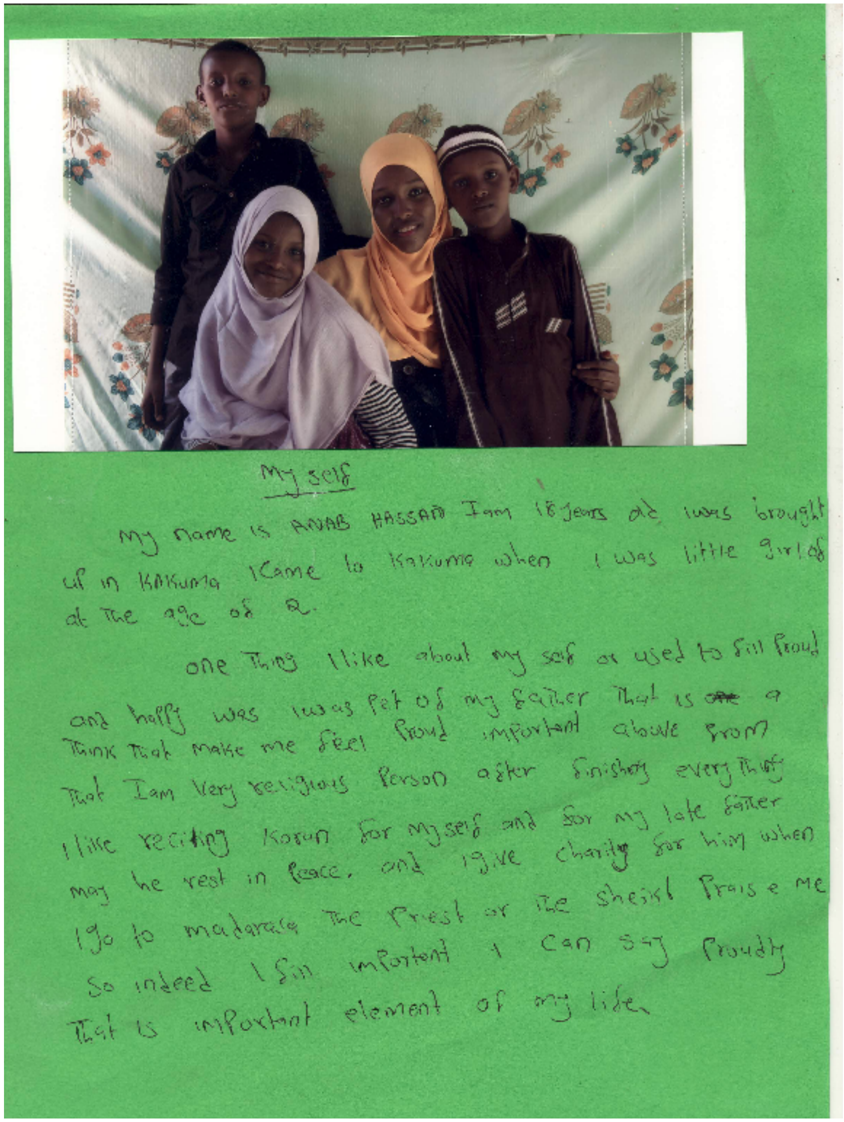
My name is HUSSEIN IBRAHIM TUTU. A sudanese by nationality I born since 1995 in the region Southern Kordofan at village called Nduradu where I have been brought up.

I reached in Kenya, Kakuma Refugee camp since 2010 and I was registered under UNHCR as a refugee and from that time upto date Iam still in the camp.

To begin with my history life, I was born in sudan and after five years that is the time when I was fled into the camp. My life in sudan was really very hard. ie there was outbreak of war already when I was born. that time enemies were killing people everynow then and as a result of that, people were having no time to cultivate for themselves and due to that there was famine. The war also create shortage of water, & cloth.

my life in camp was now good compared to that in sudan. when I was continue staying in the camp, I found that there is security, food, water, cloth and learning. All these three have made my life good or comfort.

As Iam in school, I suspect my future life to be a bit complex than the one Iam in now.

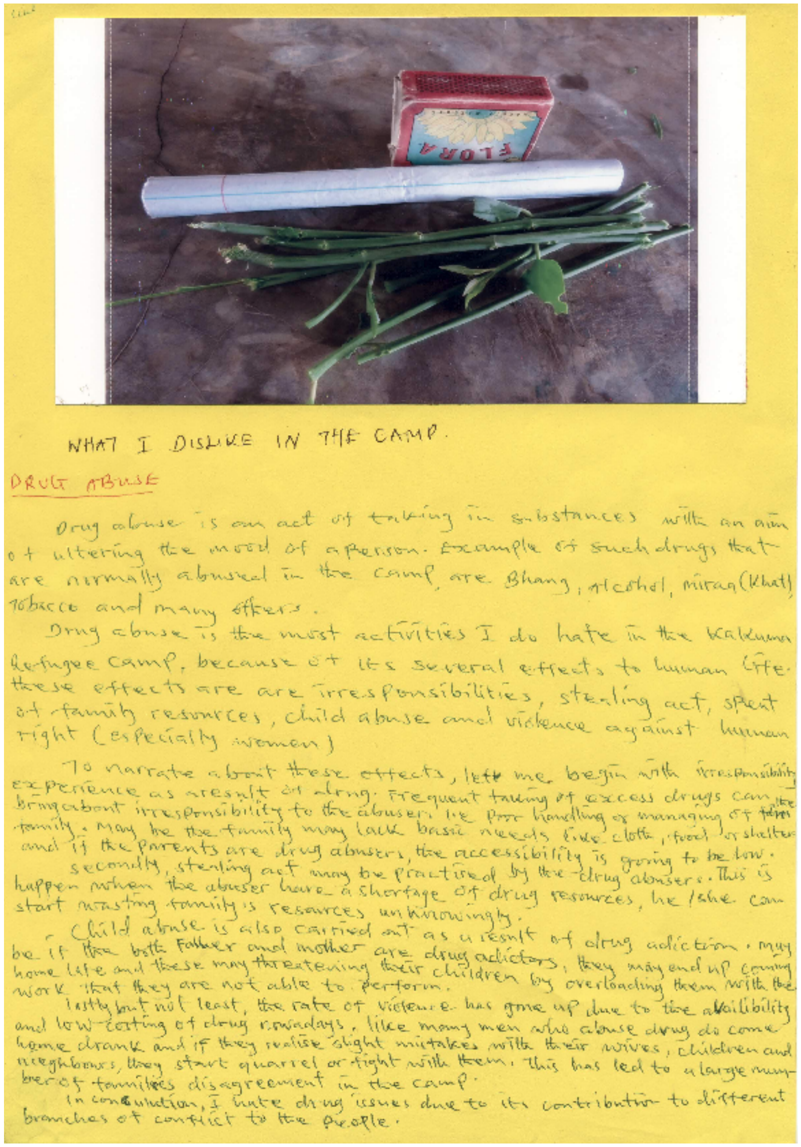


My self

My name is ANAB HASSAN Iam 18 years old Iwas brought up in KAKUMA ICame to Kakuma when I was little girl of at The age of 2.

one Thing I like about my self or used to fill Proud and happy was Iwas Pet of my father That is ~~one~~ a Think That make me feel Proud important above from That Iam Very religious Person after finishing every Thing I like reciting Korun for myself and for my late father may he rest in Peace. and I give charity for him when I go to madarasa The Priest or The sheikh Praise me So indeed I fill important I can say Proudly That is important element of my life.

Black Spots or things Hussein dislikes in the camp



WHAT I DISLIKE IN THE CAMP.

DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse is an act of taking in substances with an aim of altering the mood of aperson. Example of such drugs that are normally abused in the camp are Bhang, alcohol, miraa (Khat) tobacco and many others.

Drug abuse is the most activities I do hate in the Kakuma Refugee camp, because of its several effects to human life. these effects are are irresponsibilities, stealing act, spent of family resources, child abuse and violence against human right (especially women)

To narrate about these effects, lett me begin with irresponsibility experience as aresult of drug. Frequent taking of excess drugs can bring about irresponsibility to the abuser. i.e Poor handling or managing of the family. May be the family may lack basic needs like cloth, food or shelter and if the parents are drug abusers, the accessibility is going to be low.

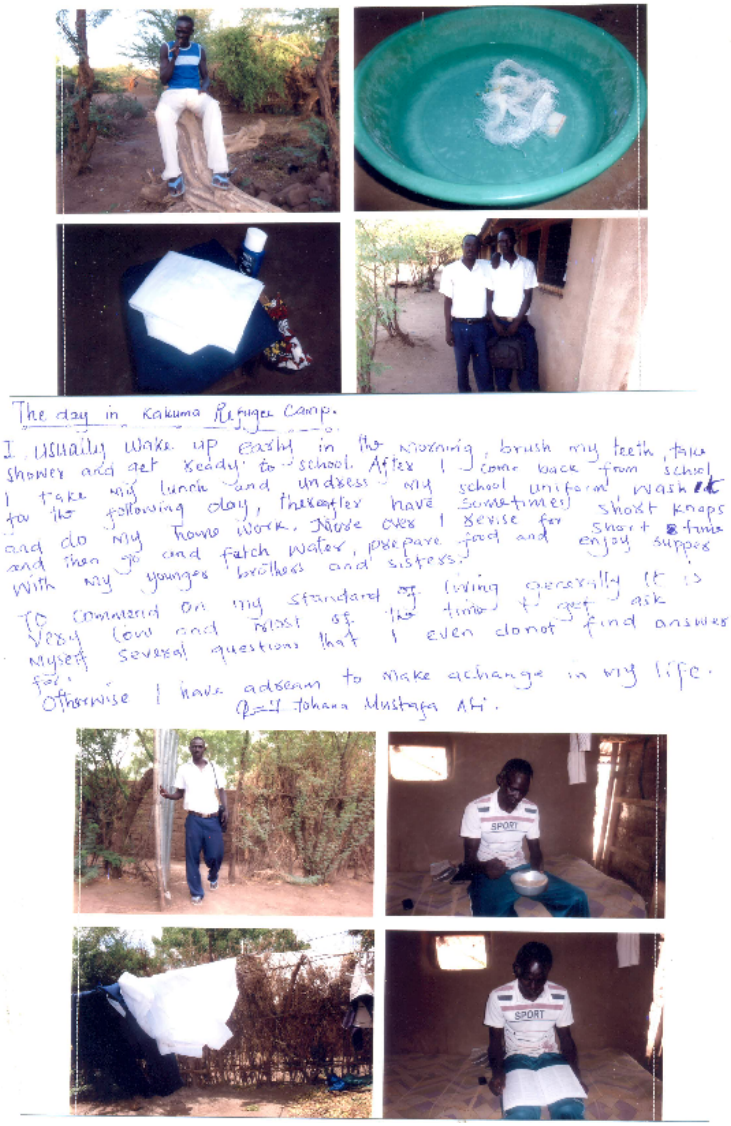
secondly, stealing act may be practised by the drug abusers. This is happen when the abuser have a shortage of drug resources, he/she can start wasting family's resources unknowingly.

Child abuse is also carried out as a result of drug adiction. may be if the both Father and mother are drug adictors, they may end up coming home late and these may threatening their children by overloading them with the work that they are not able to perform.

lastly but not least, the rate of violence has gone up due to the availibility and low-costing of drug nowadays, like many men who abuse drug do come home drank and if they realise slight mistakes with their wives, children and neighbours, they start quarrel or fight with them. this has led to a large number of families disagreement in the camp.

In conclusion, I hate drug issues due to its contribution to different branches of conflict to the people.

One day or 24 hours in the life of Yohana



The day in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

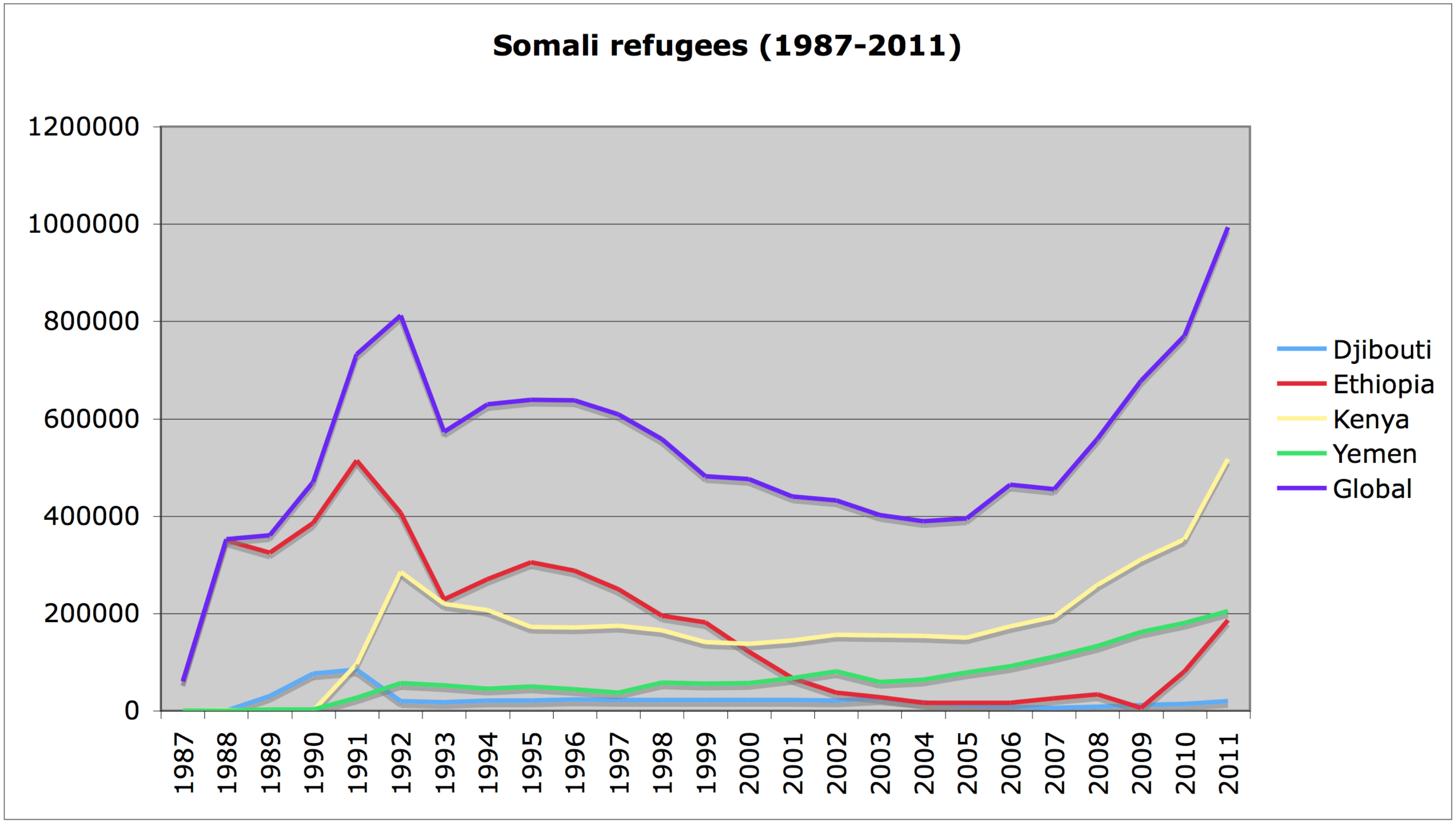
I usually wake up early in the morning, brush my teeth, take shower and get ready to school. After I come back from school I take my lunch and undress my school uniform wash it for the following day, thereafter have sometimes short knaps and do my home work. More over I revise for short time and then go and fetch water, prepare food and enjoy supper with my younger brothers and sisters.

To commend on my standard of living generally it is very low and most of the time I get ask myself several questions that I even donot find answer for.

Otherwise I have adream to make achange in my life.

Yohana Mustafa Ali.

Appendix 5: Figures of Somali refugee displacement from 1987 to 2011



Sources: UNHCR, UNHCRa and UNHCR 2011c.