

Policing the camp

Refugees and the Geographies of Humanitarian Enforcement in Kenya

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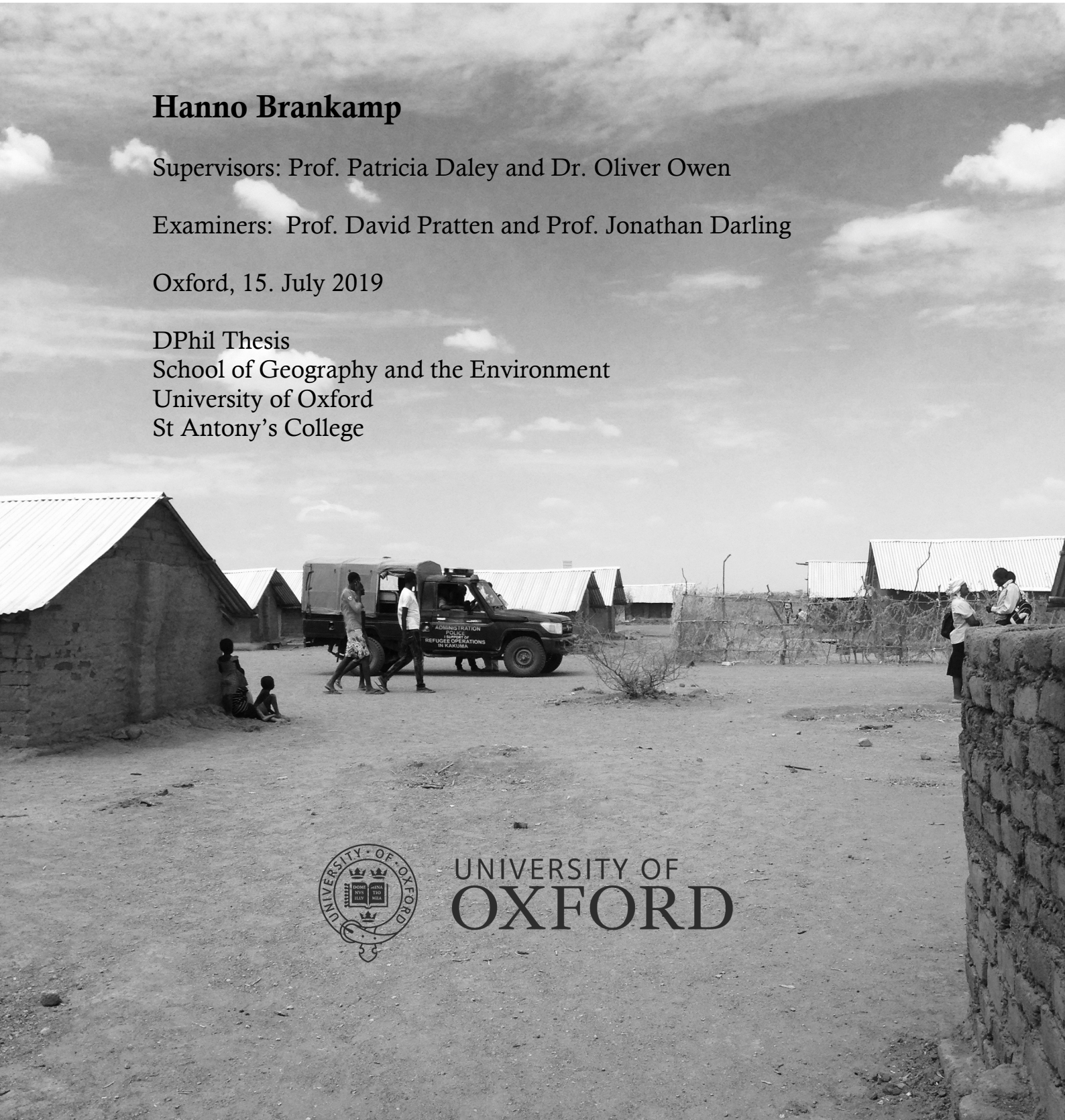
Examiners: Prof. David Pratten and Prof. Jonathan Darling

Oxford, 15. July 2019

DPhil Thesis
School of Geography and the Environment
University of Oxford
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UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD



Abstract

Humanitarianism is a morally charged project that vacillates between the alleviation of hardship and the re-inscription of further violence. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the global archipelago of camps that houses millions of displaced people and thus appears as a beacon of protection, safety, and peace. This doctoral thesis questions this deceptive image and ethnographically explores the geographies of enforcing order in the paradigmatic humanitarian space of the refugee camp. It focuses specifically on the Kakuma refugee camp in north-western Kenya but offers a reading of the spatial, governmental, and discursive effects of policing camps and non-citizen populations that resonates with order-making practices elsewhere in the colonial present. African societies have been subjected to innumerable humanitarian interventions, emergency responses, and disaster relief operations over the past few decades. Forced displacement has arguably been one of the most visible results of political turmoil, civil war, economic devastation, persecution and has hence led to encampment on an unprecedented scale throughout the continent. Viewed through the prism of containment and control, African camps are the southernmost outposts of a global system of immobilisation, border policing, and closure that is not novel but has rather reached unrivalled proportions in recent years. Based on fifteen months of ethnographic research in Kakuma camp, this study delves into three interrelated facets of humanitarian enforcement by discussing (i) the militarised spatialities of the camp in which Kenya's state violence has merged seamlessly with the contemporary humanitarian need for unobstructed aid management, (ii) the multiple technologies of government which enlist refugees themselves into upholding camp order, and (iii) the discursive practices of camp administrators who envision refugees as governable subjects that require constant policing and disciplinary checks. The study contributes to scholarship on humanitarian violence, camp geographies, refugee management, policing and local security governance in Africa, and the imaginative geographies of displacement. It counters the reification of the political technology of the camp and concludes with a discussion on the coloniality of policing refugees that exposes the illiberal disposition of humanitarianism in the global South. Policing thereby seems as integral to the workings of refugee camps as the provision of food, shelter, and legal aid. Paradoxically, it is only through uniformed officers, the baton, the gun, and the prison cell that humanitarians are able to make their promise of protection.

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For my son Nelson, who once declared that he would put up a fight should the colonisers ever wish to return.

Sisi ni kitu kimoja!

Acknowledgements

The grinding solitude of academic writing often belies the fact that research is always and invariably the result of a collaborative effort for which many people deserve acknowledgement. It is hence especially regrettable that those who have contributed the most to this piece of work with their generosity, patience, time, stories, tears, and often laughter, cannot be named for reasons of security and confidentiality. It is they who welcomed me into their lives, entrusted me with little and big secrets, showed me affection and friendship, shared their dreams along with tea, *Kisra*, *Injera*, *Baasto* and other foods, and made me feel at home in a place that most of them do not strictly call 'home'. Furthermore, I am deeply grateful for the support I have received from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that generously provided me with long-term accommodation in their compound, the UNHCR members of staff for tolerating my critical and annoying questions, for the curious openness and unexpected trust of all police officers in Kakuma despite our sometimes ambiguous and rocky relationship, Kenya's Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), refugees and Kenyans working for the Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs) and, not least, all residents of Kakuma, in- and outside of the camp. The CPPTs helped me to navigate Kakuma camp and experience it through their eyes, voices, and everyday routines. I thank them for that and for their boundless generosity with all my heart.

I would like to express gratitude to my fantastic supervisors Prof. Patricia Daley and Dr. Olly Owen for their unwavering support, generous comments, and fair criticism when reading and discussing drafts of what slowly became this thesis. I am further indebted to Dr. Oliver Bakewell for co-supervising the first two years of this research project as well as to Prof. Jonny Steinberg, Dr. Ian Klinke, and Prof. Joël Glasman

for their meticulous and insightful comments on two of the thesis chapters. Dr. Sneha Krishnan, Dr. Daniel Bos and Yolanda Weima have been great sources of support, solidarity, and encouragement. My wonderful examiners Prof. David Pratten and Prof. Jonathan Darling deserve special recognition for their thoughtful and engaging comments, and the most memorable compliment that I have ‘a very dark reading of humanitarianism’. This DPhil study was funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in conjunction with the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes). I cherish the memory of the late Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond who once told me with a smile that ‘Kakuma has already been done’ and I sincerely hope that the present study proves the usefulness of a fresh enquiry. I must also thank Ruth Saxton at Oxford’s School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE) who promptly provided me with official document scans when I was accused of foreign espionage during my fieldwork. In the DPhil community, I am incredibly grateful to Kris Lee for sushi, sake and for always giving me a place to stay, and Andrew Dwyer for memorably cathartic lunches during which we vented about the state of the world. Negar Behzadi deserves particular acknowledgement for being an encouraging, unorthodox, and delightfully radical friend.

Among those in Kenya whose names I am able to acknowledge here, I would like to highlight Berna Ataitom (#ondaba) for being an exceptional friend in the belly of the UNHCR, Mong’ina and Anita, Shane for his company and the Ugandan cigarettes, Sarah Maranga, Chegem for the plentiful supply of *khat* on our drive to the South Sudanese border, Natalia Herberg Jiménez for the white wine, Mazen Shaweesh, Clève Massamba, Claire Walkey for hiding my hard-drive that one night, Imana for playing endless rounds of table tennis in the Kakuma heat, Eunice for putting up with

an atheist despite her strong convictions, Siraaj for our Somali lessons, his incredible kindness and friendship till this day, Janet Njoroge, Teresia Ngandi, John Kanyingi, Fabian Ongaya, Paul Maundu, Florence Ayuma, and Syokau Mutonga for laughter and company in the BIEA Nairobi office over the years, Boni for his timely pick-ups, Aelya Salman, Liah Tecle, Lennart Hernander, the one and only Christine Kamau for introducing me to her own Nairobi 'muddle-class', Björn Euler, Zoltán Glück and Manissa Maharawal for their friendship and for letting me stay at their wonderful homes, Celestine Adipo, Zam Shidane and Simon Wang'oe for their help with a fair number of transcriptions, and finally Stella Wangari who is a special friend and self-proclaimed 'great African woman'.

A special thanks goes to my partner Kirsty for her support, love, and understanding throughout these past years. It is through her that I keep discovering the natural world in all its beauty and remember to take days off work. My parents Heiko Brankamp and Doris Calovini-Brankamp have afforded me the great privilege of never-ending support in whatever path I chose to tread, and it is their love, trust, and belief in me that has been a source of strength throughout my life. Both Henrik and Marieke, with whom I started my undergraduate degree in Area Studies almost ten years ago, have been remarkable friends despite our geographical distance most of this time. Finally, I would like to thank my sister-in-law Julia and in particular my brother Hauke, who has always been an inspiration, even though he might not always know it. Perhaps this contribution of a 'theory guy' may shed light on some of the structural causes of why dominant policy frameworks and institutional aid are problematic and often lie at the root of much suffering.

Hanno Brankamp, York, 8. July 2019.

List of Abbreviations

APS	Administration Police Service
ATPU	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit
BKA	Bundeskriminalamt (Germany's Criminal Investigation Department)
CID	Criminal Investigations Department (see DCI)
CPPT	Community Peace and Protection Teams
CPPA	Community Peace and Protection Assistant
DAPC	Divisional Administration Police Commander
DCI	Directorate of Criminal Investigation (see CID)
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DRA	Department of Refugee Affairs (see RAS)
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GSU	General Service Unit
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPOA	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
KPS	Kenya Police Service
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
RAS	Refugee Affairs Secretariat (see DRA)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPR	National Police Reserve (formerly Kenya Police Reserve)
NPS	National Police Service
NIS	National Intelligence Service
OCPD	Officer Commanding Police Division
OCS	Officer Commanding Station
SGBV	Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPP	Security Partnership Project
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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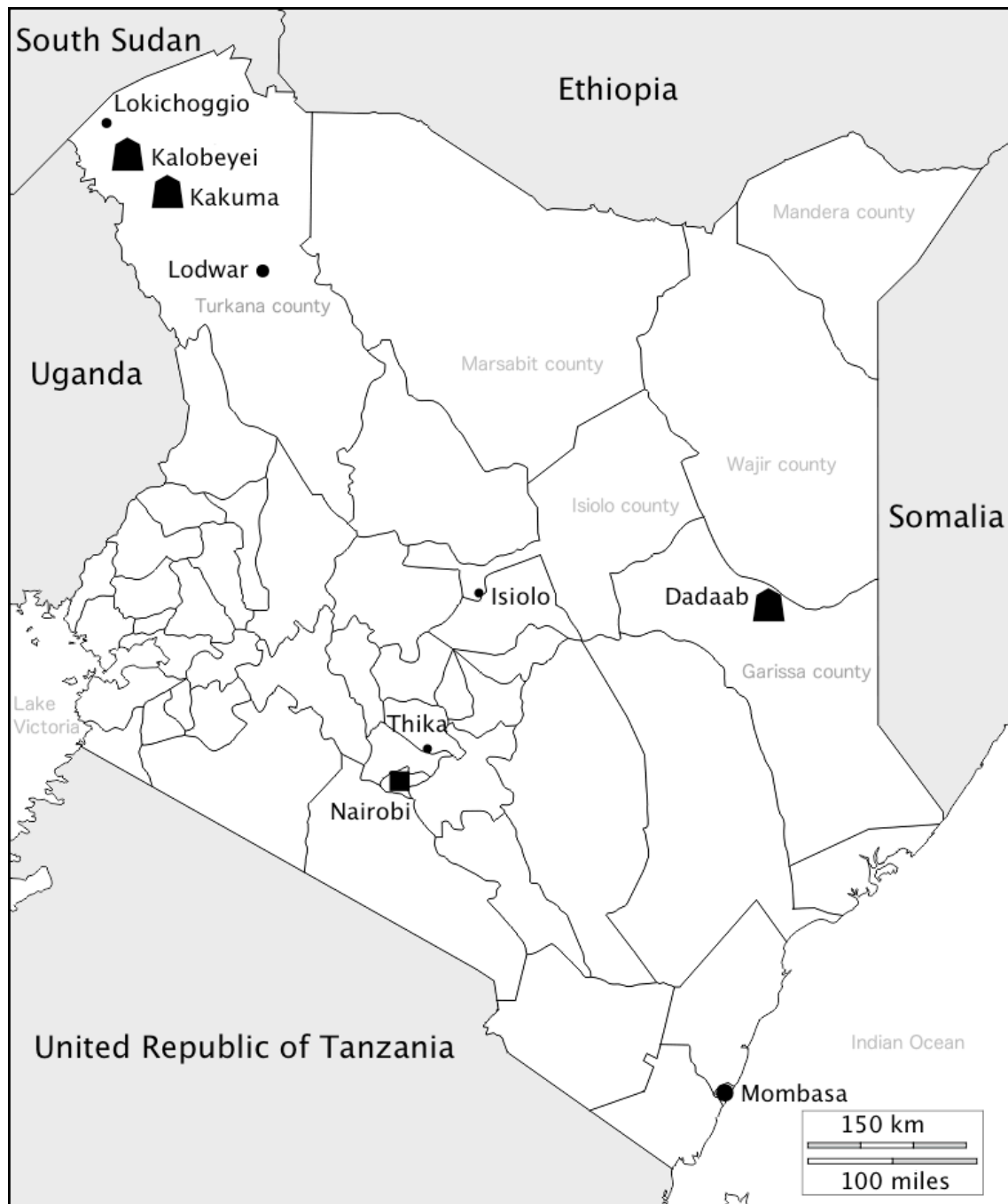


Figure 1: Map of Kenya indicating the locations of refugee camps (source: author).

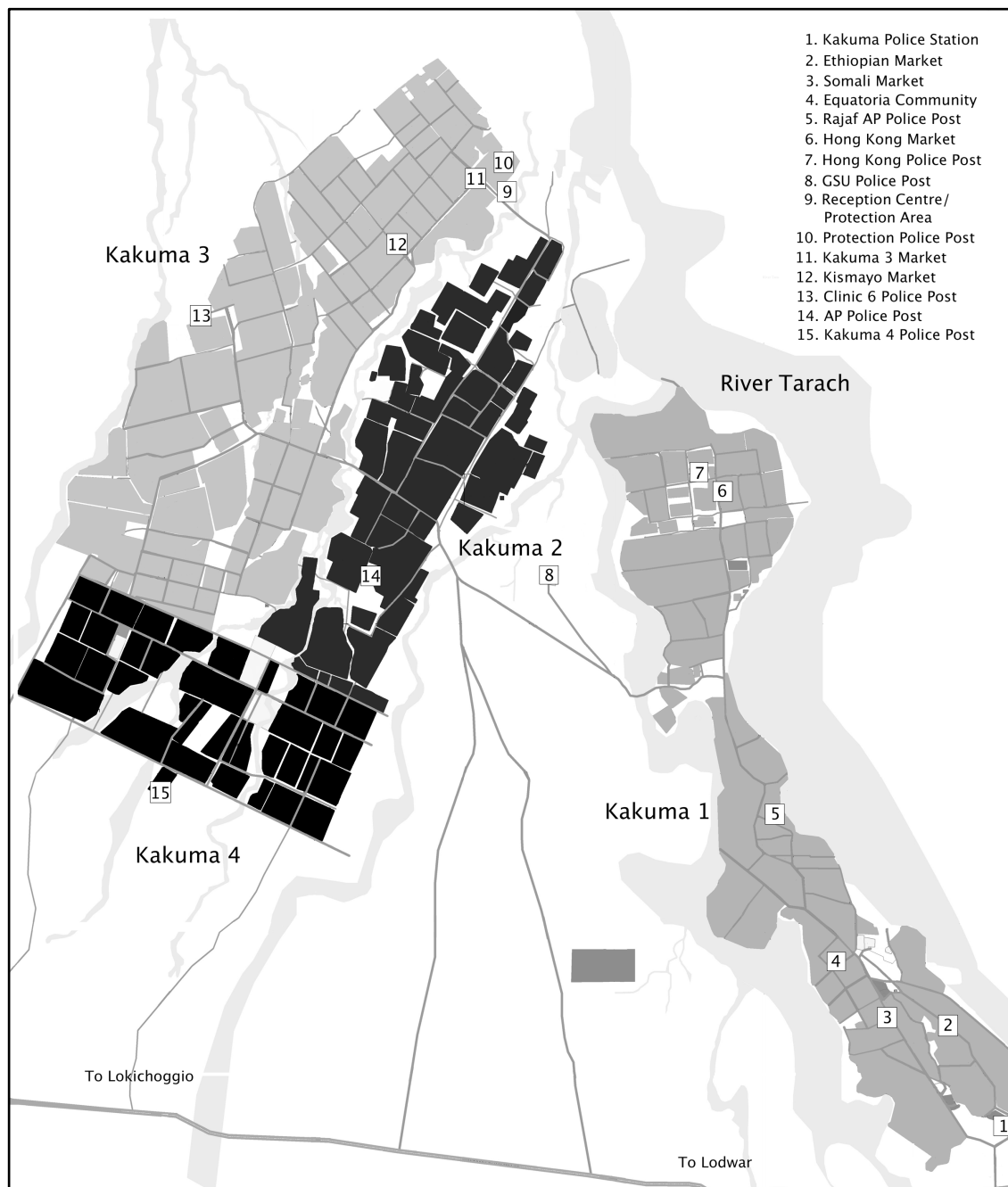


Figure 2: Map of Kakuma refugee camp (source: author, adapted from NCKK 2016).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

It is 25 December 2016 in Kakuma refugee camp, north-western Kenya. 'Abby's', a local bar and club in a remote part of the camp, is packed with joyous customers who are celebrating Christmas with beer, barbecue, and loud reggae music. Suddenly, a number of police Land Cruisers speed up to the entrance and several Kenyan officers jump out in haste. Armed with G3 rifles, the officers completely surround the bar, as some party-goers try to escape by scaling the corrugated-iron walls or sneak through the toilets at the back. Some weeks earlier, UNHCR had asked the police commander (OCS) to enforce stricter rules for closing times of bars and restaurants in the refugee camp during the holiday season, citing potential 'disturbances' and 'security threats'. On that evening, the police officers drag the customers one by one out of the bar's premises into the open and load them in the countless police vehicles that are waiting outside. In a flurry of activity, the police arrest scores of refugees and for the next few hours drive back and forth between 'Abby's', the police station and numerous smaller police posts that are scattered across the camp, while searching for free jail space to detain people overnight. An eye witness reports that 'they began at 8:00 PM to arrest people and the vehicles took around five trips, picking more and more. They must have finished at around 9:00 PM'. As police cells in Kakuma fill up with more than one hundred mostly adolescent refugees, the bargaining begins. The OCS is heard shouting instructions that, 'I don't want to release the whole group at once. Instead, everyone should present their own case'. As the relatives and families of the detained stream into the police station that night, they are being given head prices per friend, neighbour, daughter, husband, or son as something between bail and ransom, usually

1,000 Kenya shillings [\$10]. This price varies depending on the social standing and personal networks of the accused that can increase the expected profit margin. The owner and manager of the bar, a young Ethiopian woman, pleads with the OCS to no avail: her price has been set at 10,000 shillings [\$100]. As she leaves the dark and foul-smelling cells, she wonders whether it was her business rivals who tipped off the police about the Christmas party and seized a convenient opportunity to disrupt the flourishing enterprise of another competitor. UNHCR itself condemns unregistered social activities and parties inside the camp, that is nominally considered a sanctuary for persons displaced by conflict, political persecution, social calamity, and war. Still remembering that night with sadness and much disbelief, one eye witness concludes wearily, 'I heard the police ate well that night, the New Year found them well'.¹

This introductory vignette illustrates the stakes of this study. Forced migration and displacement are hallmarks of a human geography of (im)mobility, violence, and inequality on a global scale. Refugees and asylum-seekers in Africa and beyond are often at the receiving end of policies of humanitarian management, policing, and containment that show remarkable complacency about the unintended suffering and indignity they produce. Aid agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and their partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have the betterment of refugee lives at heart, but their collaboration with the sharp edge of state power in imposing curfews, arbitrary detentions, and disrupting unmonitored camp life throws their own means in doubt. The Christmas arrests in Kakuma camp were not an isolated incident but elucidate the gnawing paradox of actually existing humanitarianism which tries to protect refugees from harm across the border, while backing enforcement strategies that criminalise peaceful assemblies and restrict social

¹ Excerpt from field notes, Kakuma 3, 21.01.2017.

space in camps. This shows that refugees and other populations on the move are not simply objects of altruistic aid interventions, but are subjected to intense regimes of policing, securitisation, surveillance, and militarised control wherever they may go (Williams 2015; Jones 2017; Huysmans 2007). Immigration detention, the violence of borders, and deportation in the global North are perhaps among the most apparent emblems of these exclusionary policies and practices. Accepting refugees in Europe and North America is often measured against the possibilities of providing assistance and protection supposedly more effectively, meaningfully, and culturally appropriate in regions of origin (see Betts 2005; Hansen 2018). But while in theory the restoration of rights, freedoms, and livelihoods in countries of first asylum or origin is without a doubt highly desirable, the enforcement regimes in crowded camps are often no less violent or controversial than those that exist along Europe's and America's southern or Australia's pacific borders.

This doctoral thesis hence shifts the focus to those sites where mechanisms of policing have so far escaped the northern gaze because they are deemed conducive to a geographically more distant and ultimately 'benign' humanitarianism. It is based on ethnographic research between June 2016 and September 2017 in the Kakuma refugee camp in north-western Kenya. The study raises critical questions about the humanitarian practices on the ground and especially the violent modes of managing the displaced which, in the eyes of some, have become the 'left arm of empire' (Agier 2003). What spatial effects does this humanitarian enforcement have in the everyday? What complicities and governmentalities are involved in upholding order in a refugee camp? What are typical imaginaries and moral discourses that underpin the policing of refugees in these liminal spaces? In sum, what is at work (and at stake) in policing humanitarian camps like the one in Kakuma? The aim of this thesis is then to explore

and develop answers to these questions from multiple angles and at slightly different scales: there is the militarisation of space and policing practices that make the refugee camp more reminiscent of a space under military occupation than an aid operation; refugees themselves are enlisted to police each other in their neighbourhoods through a community policing scheme under both the aegis of humanitarian agencies and the Kenyan state; and lastly, negative imaginaries construct refugees as particular kinds of (un)governable and (im)moral subjects and thereby facilitate their domination and control. With each of these consecutive steps, the thesis uncovers a distinctive picture of humanitarian enforcement that permanently moves between higher (granular) and lower resolution with accordingly more or less ethnographic detail, yet which never reduces the camp to a single facet, story, or vantage point.

This chapter first elucidates what is meant by the rather polyvalent expression of *policing the camp* and then addresses why the study of policing in refugee camps is especially pertinent for the context of forced displacement and mobility regulation in Kenya, on the African continent, and globally. However, no ethnographic study can captivate its readers without first sketching the precise contours of the social worlds, the rhythms of everyday life, and the politics which characterise the place it portrays. The second section is hence dedicated to the life, history and organisation of Kakuma refugee camp, which includes not least an introduction of the multifaceted security and policing arrangements that exist on the ground. Lastly, I present the scholarly contributions this study aims to make and outline the general structure of this thesis.

Awkward scales: moving between policing, governance, and security

Before proceeding further, a closer discussion of the terminologies used in this thesis is necessary. Perhaps counter-intuitively, *Policing the camp* is not exclusively about the

daily work of the public police – the uniformed professionals tasked with enforcing ‘law and order’ within the ambit of the refugee camp – even though that is one of its implicit meanings, as will become especially evident in Chapter 4. Instead, ‘policing’ typically carries a plethora of different meanings, which stretch from a Foucauldian reading of the term as the miscellaneous and dispersed efforts to regulate and manage the lives of populations and enforce collective norms (Foucault 2007) to its narrowest definition as the specific activities of public law enforcement agencies engaged in the whole ‘human-scale expression of the state’ (Seigel 2018, 9) – anything from issuing parking tickets, beat patrols, to far more spectacular manifestations of crime fighting and anti-terror operations. On the one end of this spectrum, policing edges on (and is hence almost synonymous with) ‘governance’ as the networked processes which coordinate economic activities, social life, and personal conducts in society through various registers (Painter 2009, 312). On the other, it is reduced to everyday practices aimed at protecting a particular institutionalised order, often (but not always) with reference to matters of security and crime. In order to fully capture this conceptual promiscuity, it is pivotal to acknowledge that policing in the camp sits at the interface of these multiple nested meanings, governmental relations, discourses, and everyday sovereign practices which render it at once difficult to study and inherently ‘awkward of scale’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003, 151).

Neither an analysis of overarching governmental structures nor the practice-oriented and somewhat descriptive lens of local ‘everyday policing’ (Buur and Jensen 2004) is, therefore, sufficient to account for the ‘in-betweenness’ that makes policing such a slippery social phenomenon. Broader than crime fighting but narrower than governance, policing always involves *practices of exclusion* which simultaneously use the power of discourses, surveillance and, not least, coercion in seeking to enforce

spatial control over human mobility (see Herbert 1996), (re)define the constituencies of their control (see Stenson 1993), and eliminate forms of deviance and disorder (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2006), whether imaginary or real. This inherent definitional simultaneity of policing is further reflected in the study's multi-layered analysis that spans the direct control over spaces and circulations in the refugee camp (Chapter 4), the governmentalisation of those people recruited to enforce different visions of order (Chapter 5) and, lastly, the field of popular sociocultural discourses which naturalise policing decisions of in/exclusion and thus underpin enforcement with a panoply of banal imaginaries of 'otherness' (Chapter 6). These three articulations of exclusion, together, characterise policing as a set of practices that are not solely 'local' but rather draw on resources, networks and registers that lie 'in-between', 'beyond' and traverse multiple scales. This renders policing a particular governing process which – unlike governance generally, with its capacious purview of management, allocation, and networked authority – is specifically concerned with *making* and *maintaining* of both symbolic and physical boundaries under the constant possibility of coercion (Seigel 2018; Pratten 2017; Herbert 1996; Kyed and Albrecht 2015).

The invocation of 'security' is a nonessential but common element of policing. Sometimes defined as the 'freedom from imagined or real danger in present or future' (Graham and Gregory 2009, 672), security is fundamentally a performative and discursive construct which mobilises collective and individual fears of danger, threat, and political harm and thus sets in motion corresponding courses of action. Security is, hence, a kind of spectacle which can encroach without warning onto a social scene by conjuring the spectre of 'peril' through speech acts and securitisation of a referent object supposedly in need of preservation (Buzan, Weaver, and De Wilde 1998). The centrality that has been afforded to tropes of (in)security in global politics, diplomacy,

and administration of local communities in the last decades, gave subsequently rise to a broader notion of ‘security governance’ (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009; Wood and Shearing 2007). However, while policing processes routinely marshal security as a powerful motive and ordering principle to legitimate their exclusionary practices, they often also revert to alternative logics, moral ontologies, and discourses to delimit the boundaries of human mobility, social permissibility and belonging, that are to be policed. *Policing the camp*’s idiosyncratic approach thus integrates several coterminous ideas of what it means ‘to police’ refugees and spaces of humanitarian aid. Crucially, it traces the multifaceted boundary work of policing in Kakuma through quotidian practices of spatial enforcement, the processes that ideologically govern crime control and community mobilisation, and the discursive practices that reproduce and justify a particular ordering of society, spaces, and policed refugee bodies. By conceptually and methodologically moving between these linked notions of policing, governance and security, the thesis is able to illustrate that the camp itself emerges tautologically as a policing technology that enacts complementary forms of exclusion on awkward scales.

Why study the policing of refugee camps?

This is a fascinating yet equally troubling time to explore the geographies of policing, mobility control, and enforcement in humanitarian spaces. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are presently more than 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, a number that has more than doubled in the past ten years (UNHCR 2006a, 2017). Even though the vast majority are displaced within their own countries of citizenship or residence, rendering them

internally-displaced persons (IDPs), 28.5 million people have crossed international borders during their flight and apply for, or have received, recognition as ‘refugees’.



Figure 3: Police in full uniform at Jamhuri Day 2016, Kakuma (source: author).

While these legalistic distinctions can be important in safeguarding individual rights for protection in another country, they obscure the commonalities in risks to life and livelihood, and the marginality that most displaced populations share (Daley 2013a; Phuong 2004). Despite the populist panics in the wake of Europe’s so-called refugee or ‘migration crisis’, the majority of the world’s displaced are still found in the global South², with a large proportion of at least 18.8 million living in Africa alone (IDMC

² The terms ‘global North’ and ‘global South’ denote a tentative political, socio-economic, and postcolonial divide of world regions. While I use ‘global North’ in reference to the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Israel, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan

2017; UNHCR 2017). Globally, it is estimated that some 58% of refugees and forced migrants reside in private accommodation and urban settings rather than camps, but this disregards vastly differential rates of refugee urbanisation in world regions. While many Syrian refugees tend to live in commercial housing, most displaced populations in Southeast Asia and across African countries continue to be settled overwhelmingly in camps (UNHCR 2017, 60). It is estimated that today there are well over a thousand humanitarian camps worldwide (Janmyr and Knudsen 2018) which are supposedly built for temporary relief, shelter, and assistance. However, the stalling of political processes to end what are often referred to as ‘humanitarian emergencies’ and restore citizenship rights has rendered many refugee situations semi-permanent, ‘protracted’ and made them last several decades (Loescher and Milner 2004; Hyndman and Giles 2011).

Africa in particular has acquired an inglorious claim to fame as what Michel Agier has called the ‘continent of camps’ (Agier 2011, 3). Four of the most populous refugee camps globally are located in Eastern Africa alone: the Bidi Bidi camps in Uganda have a population of around 287,000, the Dadaab camps³ in northeastern Kenya host 235,000 refugees, the Kakuma camp and the Kalobeyei ‘integrated settlement’⁴ in northwestern Kenya have a total of 186,000 refugees, the Dollo Ado camp complex in Ethiopia houses 219,000 people, and lastly the Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania exceeds 153,000 residents⁵. This admittedly cursory overview is important

and the Gulf States, my definition of the ‘global South’ comprises the whole of Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, most of South America, and Asia (apart from East Asia).

³ The Dadaab camp complex comprises the Hagadera, Dagahaley, Ifo, and Ifo II³ sub-camps. The Kambioos sub-camp was closed in 2017.

⁴ Kalobeyei was established in June 2016. It is nominally considered an ‘integrated settlement’ rather than a camp because it was envisioned as a common settlement for refugees and local citizens. However freedom of movement for refugees is still curtailed and Kalobeyei has the appearance of yet another ‘camp’.

⁵ All of this current data is available from: www.unhcr.org (last accessed: 14.02.2019).

to give a glimpse of the extent of encampment in this region and perhaps put into perspective the renewed academic and political debates about the sudden resurgence of camp formations in Europe and the global North (Minca 2005; Vradis et al. 2018). In 2015 alone, UNHCR built twelve new and expanded seven existing refugee camps in Africa (UNHCR 2018a), a statistic that does not include the innumerable informal camps and camp-like settlements that refugees have often constructed in the twilight of aid operations and without institutional support. 'Refugee camps' hence comprise a broad range of displacement camps, spaces of aid and assistance, as well as of self-settlement (Hailey 2009; Agier 2011). They range from closed facilities of detention, the sprawling yet highly restrictive camp-cities of Kenya, to the Ugandan settlements that warrant a slightly higher degree of freedom. In light of this purported expansion of veritable landscapes of displacement as defining features of this current moment in political history, philosopher Achille Mbembe has argued that the masses of people on the move today are harbingers of a new global class of subalterns.

The new 'wretched of the earth' are those to whom the right to have rights is refused, those who are told not to move, those who are condemned to live within structures of confinement – camps, transit centres, the thousands of sites of detention that dot our spaces of law and policing. (Mbembe 2017, 177)

As incisive as this sentiment may indeed be, it would do well in acknowledging more explicitly the *longue durée* of mobility controls in their politico-historical trajectories. After all, it was Fanon who recognised the dialectical relationship of domination between a fortified Northern world which staked claims on modernity, progress, and democracy, and those places it colonized and exploited that experienced governance as a mixture of force and what Fassin described as 'discretionary humanitarianism' (Fassin 2011, 213). 'The dividing line, the border', Fanon formulated back then, 'is

represented by the barracks and the police stations' (Fanon 2004, 3). Besteman treads similar ground when she contends that a militarised security apparatus, that is being steered from the global North, governs racialised migrant populations through new forms of Apartheid on a planetary scale (Besteman 2018). But although the current degree of enclosure, walling-off, and immobilisation undoubtedly shows an alarming upward trend, scholars like Tesfahuney already resented twenty years earlier that the 'differential mobility empowerments' created graduated categories of humanity that formed the basis of restrictive 'geopolicing systems' (Tefahuney 1998, 501).

In this reading, the 'new' wretched of the earth bear unmistakable semblance with the 'old' in that they originate from the same (formerly) colonised societies and are embedded in global structures of oppression which follow comparable fault lines and power hierarchies. In Euro-America, increasing numbers of refugee and asylum-seeker arrivals in past years have been discursively used to escalate the securitisation of migration and border controls (Huysmans 2007; Bigo 2014; Jones 2017). The consequences have been first the growing militarisation of borders (Andersson 2016; Jones and Johnson 2016) and second the off-shoring of asylum processing and the intensification of immigration detention practices (Mountz 2011; Moran, Gill, and Colon 2016; Ashutosh and Mountz 2012). This has sparked a concomitant interest in the police, state enforcers of the law, and supranational border agencies, such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), which are involved in the 'dirty work' of migration control (Weber 2013; Léonard 2010; Aas and Gundhus 2015). Yet, geopolicing systems neither stop at entry points nor with forced removals of undesirable bodies from the global North, but permeate the fabric of postcolonial societies as well. For this reason, institutions like the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have offered trainings and technical expertise for African states to

enhance intra-continental border controls and curb irregular migration in places like Libya, Tanzania, and Kenya (IOM 2017a, 2017b; Brachet 2016).

While borders are paradigmatic sites of exclusionary policing and embody processes of state territorialisation (Fassin 2011; Collyer 2007; Bialasiewicz 2012), refugee camps are at least as intrinsic to the visceral dialectics of ‘mobility’ and ‘containment’, and constitute important flash points where the policing of migrants and the perpetuation of the humanitarian order more broadly crystallise in material fixtures. However, like borders, camps are equally ‘always under control yet always liminal’ (Agier 2016, 151). Most existing studies on refugee camps in Africa have focused on humanitarian government as shorthand for the work of UN agencies and NGOs (Agier 2011; Hyndman 2000; Bulley 2014; Harrell-Bond 1986; Slaughter and Crisp 2009; Jaji 2012) or have interrogated ways refugees navigate camp life and aid institutions (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Turner 2005, 2010; Jansen 2016; Horst 2006). Policing in refugee camps has thus been treated as a ‘black box’, something which is undeniably taking place and has a direct bearing on the humanitarian regime but is neither well understood nor sufficiently studied. One reason for this may be the assumption that camps are the preserve of a liberal aid regime and hence constitute imperfect islands of humanity in which coercion is a ‘contamination’ rather than part of the design. First, this ignores that a growing number of African states have indeed bolstered their formal involvement in refugee management in recent years⁶. Second, and more fundamentally, those same states have always had a role in humanitarian governance, namely through deploying police, military, and miscellaneous security forces to support relief operations in refugee-hosting areas. The aim of this thesis is

⁶ Examples include Ethiopia’s Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), Kenya’s Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS), and Rwanda’s Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs (MIDIMAR).

to look beyond the liberal rhetoric of refugee management, which promises economic efficiency, democratic participation, self-regulation and empowerment, and instead understand how different forms of policing mark the violent backbone of order in one of the largest humanitarian camps in the world.

Even though the focus of this study is on the specific case of Kakuma camp, it can speak to the structures of policing and enforcement in humanitarian camps and contexts of long-term displacement elsewhere. By concentrating on policing as the sharp end of camp governance, this study contributes to the debates on humanitarian violence which have hitherto considered a number of different environments (Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015; Weizman 2011; Slim 2001; Branch 2009; Lopez 2015; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010). Furthermore, it adds to a growing ethnographic literature on police institutions and police work in Africa that is concerned with the micro-politics of law enforcement and everyday practices of uniformed bureaucrats more widely (Beek et al. 2017; Steinberg 2008; Diphooorn 2015; Blundo and Glasman 2013; Hornberger 2011; Owen 2016; Chalfin 2010). Although migrants and refugees alike surface in accounts on immigration detention, border controls and deportation (Klaaren and Ramji 2001; Vigneswaran 2008; Carling 2007), there is still a dearth of research dedicated to the policing of refugees, asylum-seekers and other non-citizens on the continent specifically. Policing in camps and humanitarian spaces reveals not only an often-uneasy relationship between the enforcers of state power on the street level and humanitarian agencies but crucially encapsulates how the postcolonial state constructs, acts towards, and spatialises non-citizen populations. Conceptually, this study brings into conversation the geographies of the camp (Ramadan 2012; Minca 2015; Katz, Martin, and Minca 2018; Picker and Pasquetti 2015; Diken and Laustsen 2006) with spatial approaches to policing (Herbert 1996; Coleman 2016; James 2006;

Yarwood 2007; Fyfe 1991) because both hinge on configurations of care and control and are inscribed with a particular concern for the regulation of socio-spatialities and temporalities (see Chapter 3). While the camp is thus a veritable policing technology, it is everyday policing practices which in turn produce the exclusionary effects of the camp. Finally, in order to enhance our understanding of what is at work in policing camps, we need to pay closer attention to the means, strategies, rationalities and, not least, practices which are deployed by states, local actors and international agencies alike to enforce 'order' within these city-like agglomerations of 'people out of place' (Hyndman 2012) that have persisted in the global South for many decades and have made a recent comeback in the North. Policing provides a unique window into the ways in which the state respatialises its relationship with displaced populations and the humanitarian institutions through the microcosm of the camp.

Refugees in Kenya: asylum, encampment, and counter-terrorism

At the time of writing Kenya had a refugee population of at least 471,000, a figure which nonetheless excludes scores of unregistered asylum-seekers living in cities such as Mombasa and Nairobi⁷. Since the beginning of the early 1990s, Kenya has hosted enormous numbers of refugees in camps. Concurrent influxes of Somalis, Ethiopians and South(ern) Sudanese around 1991 transformed Kenya into one of Africa's largest refugee-hosting states (Hyndman 1999). After having initially granted free movement and relative economic integration for 12,000 Ugandans during the 1970s and 1980s, similar liberal asylum policies were no longer seen as viable with the growing refugee population (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005, 31). While the government of Daniel

⁷ See: <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/figures-at-a-glance> (accessed: 20.02.2019).

arap Moi first avoided the establishment of camps, it opted for increased deportations to discourage the further inflow of asylum-seekers instead (Hyndman and Nylund 1998). But as the hygienical and logistical conditions in the country's only reception centre near Thika deteriorated, the UNHCR persuaded the government to allow the construction of camps in the remote semi-arid north of its national territory to relieve the stretched facility further south (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005, 33; Campbell 2006). While Kakuma and the three Dadaab camps (Ifo, Hagadera and Dagahaley) were the most populous of those settlements, there were also a number of smaller camps across the northern periphery in Marsabit, Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, as well as along the coast near Mombasa⁸. This was in line with the United Nations Refugee Agency's endorsement of encampment with its 1997 policy on urban refugees which maintained that humanitarian assistance should be provided only in camps or rural settlements (UNHCR 1997, 10).

But even though refugees found first sanctuary in camps, their future in Kenya as a whole was nevertheless precarious. In August 1992, during police swoops in Nairobi and Mombasa, 2000 refugees were arrested and forced to return to the camps (HRW 1993), a policing tactic which would be repeated periodically in coming years, especially in the aftermath of the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). However, even after the return to multi-party democracy under the presidency of Mwai Kibaki, after years of authoritarian rule, the Kenyan state continued to regard Somali refugees in particular through the 'security prism' rather than the humanitarian responsibilities that it had towards them (Kagwanja and Juma 2008, 219). The year 2011 eventually marked a caesura for the

⁸ These additional camps included Habasweine, Rhamu, Liboi, Mandera, Banessa, El Wak, Walda, Swaleh Nguru, Utange, Marafa, Hatimy, and Jomvu.

Kenyan state's engagement with this refugee population. A number of determinants, including lingering border insecurity, regional political ambitions, and the protection of the Kenyan coast from 'terror' attacks led to Nairobi's decision to invade southern Somalia and create a buffer zone with the territories held by the Somali *Al-Shabaab* militants (Anderson and McKnight 2015). This external military campaign directed at one of Kenya's neighbouring countries was accompanied by increased crackdowns on refugees domestically and, following a series of attacks in Nairobi's Eastleigh and across the country's northeast, Kenya's Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) issued a directive ordering the return of the bulk of the 100,000 urban refugees to the camps in December 2012 (Yarnell and Thomas 2014). Chapter 4 will illustrate that this invasion of Somalia was in fact not unprecedented but constituted an extraversion of the domestic military-style occupation which had been underway inside the Kenyan refugee camps for much longer.

Political see-sawing between refugee expulsions and encampment continues until today under the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta. At the start of his first term, the devastating attacks on Nairobi's Westgate Shopping Mall in September 2013 were taken as a justification for escalating Kenya's 'anti-terror' and anti-refugee operations both in Somalia and at home (Mwangi 2018; Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom 2017). In March 2014, despite the lawful presence of registered urban refugees, then Cabinet Secretary Joseph Ole Lenku renewed the government's directive for the compulsory return of all refugees to the camps (Ombati 2014). Barely one month later, the police and other Kenyan security forces descended in masses on Nairobi's Eastleigh estate in what the government termed *Operation Sanitization of Eastleigh* and which would be

soon popularly known as *Operation Usalama Watch* (Operation Security Watch)⁹. The operation lasted two weeks and primarily targeted refugees while inadvertently also affecting Kenya's own ethnic Somali minority citizens who were caught up in urban raids. Thousands of people were imprisoned, abused, humiliated and 'screened' for their legal status and right to reside in Kenya at Kasarani stadium in Eastern Nairobi (Balakian 2016). Because of the lack of an official law which stipulated encampment, the legal aid clinic *Kituo cha Sheria* sued the administration over unlawful detainment of refugees and its forced encampment practices. Later in 2014, Nairobi's High Court found that the Kenyatta government had indeed acted against the law (Wirth 2014).

In June 2014, a deadly attack in the coastal town of Mpeketoni emboldened Kenyan authorities in their restrictive counter-terrorism policies which continued to limit asylum space for refugees (Mwangi 2018). To prevent further court challenges to the encampment from advocacy and human rights organisations, the government passed an omnibus Security Laws Amendment Act (GoK 2014) which retroactively embedded the mandatory containment of refugees in 'designated areas' into the 2006 Refugees Act and thereby for the first time enshrined the policy in Kenyan law. Only four months later, *Al-Shabaab* gunmen stormed the Garissa University College in the northeast of the country and killed 148 students and staff in April 2015. A quick government response was forthcoming, as Vice-President William Ruto demanded the full closure of the Dadaab refugee camps and made the disillusioned promise that 'Kenya is going to change for good after Garissa' (in Cooper-Knock 2015). While Ruto's remarks resounded at the time as an inconsequential tactic to vie for increased donor funds, one year later Nairobi repeated the closure threat and extended it at first

⁹ Some observers in Eastleigh jokingly referred to it as 'Operation Osama Watch' in allusion to the former Saudi-born head of *Al-Qaida*.

to the Kakuma camp as well. On 6 May 2016, the Ministry of Interior published a statement in which it declared that the ‘hosting of refugees has come to an end’ and that, perhaps to demonstrate determination, it had swiftly disbanded the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) to phase out all refugee assistance. Days later, the decision to close Kakuma was rescinded in act of political theatre while the Dadaab closure would face multiple legal challenges from civil society and drew criticism from donor governments and humanitarian organisations in the following months (Cannon and Fujibayashi 2018; Brankamp 2016b; Hajir 2016). Field research for this doctoral study commenced around one month later in June 2016 and was therefore conducted in an atmosphere of rising uncertainty about the future of asylum and refugee protection in Kenya. Over the past three decades, the Kenyan state successively tried to forestall the first creation of camps, then to contain refugees from ‘spilling’ out into the rest of the country’s cities, and finally returned full circle to pursuing a strategy of expulsion and closure. Curiously, however, during the same month as the Kenyan government was liaising with UNHCR and Somalia’s federal government to repatriate Somalis from the Dadaab camps, it began a mutual partnership with UNHCR and Turkana’s County Government to open the so-called Kalobeyei ‘integrated settlement’, a camp-like project that nominally aims to move from humanitarian aid to development, self-reliance, and local integration, despite lacking provisions to grant refugees freedom of movement within Kenya¹⁰.

¹⁰ Official information on the project can be found at <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/kalobeyei-settlement>.

Kakuma: life, history, and organisation of a refugee camp in Kenya



Figure 4: View of the Ethiopian market, Kakuma 1 (source: author).

‘Kakuma is a big university where you can learn many things’, said Asfaw, an Ethiopian and one of the first refugees I spoke with during a pilot study in the camp in 2015. Only with time and more reflection did I truly appreciate what Asfaw had meant with these carefully chosen words. Kakuma is perhaps one of those interstitial spaces where the world is being constructed thousand-fold from the dreams, lives and anxieties of strangers into a ‘little cosmopolitan world’ (Agier 2016, 61). ‘We are voluntary prisoners in this place’, Asfaw mused while using his right hand to make circular gestures of sorts into the sweltering air¹¹. Located near the border triangle where Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda meet, the refugee camp is undoubtedly a

¹¹ Interview, Kakuma, 18.03.2015.

peculiar place that was cast into the hot and arid northern periphery of Kenya as if to separate, once and for all, those who belong in the country from those who do not. The camp has been varyingly described as an ‘urban enclave’ (Perouse De Montclos and Kagwanja 2000), an experiment of ‘humanitarian urbanism’ (Jansen 2018), and as a veritable ‘city in the desert’ (Oka 2011). It is therefore no surprise that Asfaw saw Kakuma as both a prison *and* a university, an enclosure that embodied confinement and the constraint of freedoms, as well as an unlikely gateway to a world beyond. Although Asfaw did not make it explicit, this metonym of the prison as university, a mythicised institution which does not simply incarcerate but *transforms* individuals, inadvertently invoked the iconic image of Robben Island Prison in Apartheid South Africa, which was then widely known as the ‘university of the struggle’ (Bady 2014). Despite the attraction that this analogy may indeed have in the face of unforgiving climatic and social conditions in Kakuma, the refugee camp as a prison remains a reductive image¹². In Chapter 4, I contend that military-style ‘occupation’ is perhaps a better and analytically cogent analogy.

Kakuma is a remarkably vibrant, urban space whose multi-ethnic and multi-national populace stems from eighteen different countries and thus gives it a uniquely cosmopolitan and perhaps even pan-African feel, with dozens of languages, dialects, and accents from across the continent being spoken in the camp’s bustling markets, restaurants, and other public spaces. Somali shop-owners trade in anything from clothes, camel meat, and khat¹³ (*miraa*), to laptops and mobile banking services, while the Ethiopians are among the most successful refugees in retail and hospitality. The camp’s streets are littered with Ethiopian restaurants and bars that sell the sour *injera*

¹² Agier distinguishes between the Camp with a capital ‘C’ and the camp with a small ‘c’, the former representing a juridico-political concept and institution while the latter denotes the empirical reality of asylum spaces (Agier 2011, 188).

¹³ Khat (or qat, miraa, veve) is a stimulant plant that is popular across the entire Horn of Africa.

flatbread with regional flavours from Oromiya and Amhara which attract customers from all backgrounds. Kakuma is at once a humanitarian camp with an aspirational mission to protect a war-affected and forcibly displaced population, as well as a place of unfathomable fusion where Nuer students, Dinka musicians, Darfurian butchers, Kordofanian tailors, Congolese barbers, Burundian motorcyclists, Eritrean chefs and Turkana firewood traders live side by side. Besides those predominant ethnic groups and nationalities, there are also groups of ‘camp unicorns’ like the handful of Saudis, Burkinabés, Yemenites, and at one point even an Iranian and Ukrainian refugee¹⁴. It is the simultaneity of constraints imposed on individuals yet their infinite resourcefulness and willingness to make decisions of an unknowable and creative nature (see Steinberg 2016) that also finds its expression in the myriad of different lives lived in this camp. Kakuma is hence an epicentre of what Agier would describe as ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Agier 2016, 78) – life circumstances in which feelings of foreignness are shared by everyone and thereby turned into a commonality.

A 2017 UNHCR census calculated the camp population at 148,000 (UNHCR 2018b), making it comparable in size to cities like Oxford in the UK or Machakos in Kenya, and epitomising displacement not as an abstraction but as a kaleidoscopic amalgam of dislocated but continuing human lives full of hope, fear, and desire. Presiding over the administrative functions in the camp is the ‘Camp Manager’¹⁵, a Kenyan government official in the Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) charged with overseeing the services provided by UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, as well as the 25 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which have become ‘implementing partners’ in diverse sectors from water and hygiene, to health and education. Movement in and

¹⁴ While two Saudis and one Burkinabé are still in the camp at the time of writing, the Iranian and Ukrainian refugees had been resettled and repatriated, respectively, before my arrival in Kakuma.

¹⁵ In Kakuma, the position of Camp Manager was first established in 2007, as stipulated in the 2006 Refugees Act. Interview, former Deputy Camp Manager of Kakuma, Nairobi, 23.03.2017.

out of the camp is restricted and refugees are obliged to apply for ‘movement passes’ from the Camp Manager before journeys. In spite of this regulatory regime, Kakuma has become a veritable hub for economic activities and trade between the refugees, local Turkana and Kenyans from ‘down country’ in the south (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru 2016; Oka 2011). Ordinary people, who are neither part of the humanitarian establishment nor the Kenyan authorities, travel here with shared taxis. A whole fleet of white Toyota Probox shuttle busily on the potholed highway between this north-western corner of Turkana and the county capital of Lodwar. Towards the end of this strenuous three-and-a-half-hour journey, the refugee camp first appears faintly on the horizon like a mirage – a sea of iron-roofed houses which reflect the scorching sun in the sheer infinite vastness of the Turkana plains.

From a South Sudanese to a cosmopolitan camp

The camp’s founding history has become an indelible part of its ‘visibility’ and appeal in the harsh and donor-driven world of humanitarian aid. The plight of the so-called ‘Lost Boys of Sudan’ has since been recounted many times, and was popularised for a broader audience not least in the autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng (Eggers 2006; see also Bixler 2005), then a South Sudanese refugee and one of Kakuma’s first residents. I met Valentino when he attended the 25-year anniversary celebrations for the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) engagement in Kakuma in 2017. It was his first visit back to the camp since having been resettled to the United States alongside many of his age-mates in the early 2000s (Jansen 2008). In 1992, this group of mostly South Sudanese juveniles, who had fled the conflicts that had been raging between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) since 1983, arrived in the Kenyan border town of Lokichoggio where the humanitarian

Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) was then based. Having covered long distances on foot during their winding journey from their refugee camps in Ethiopia back to Sudan and eventually into Kenya, the thousands of adolescents and children were given the unflattering but memorable epithet ‘Lost Boys’ or ‘walking boys’ by the international press (Schechter 2004; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005, 32). After crossing the border, the boys were transported 100 kilometres further inland to the small Kenyan town of Kakuma, where a new camp was being established. Ohta remembers the coming of refugees from the perspective of the local Turkana pastoralists, who he had studied for years, noting that many Turkana ‘suddenly encountered the peculiar situation of having to live side by side with huge numbers of complete strangers’ (Ohta 2005, 227). The current chief of Kakuma remembered this time period well, as he was still a student at a local secondary school when the camp was opened. ‘Some of the refugees knew how to do business, they opened shops, butcheries where they slaughtered animals. Others came with a sort of “war hangover”, he said, ‘and the Dinka Bahr-al-Ghazal and Nuer began to fight among each other’. At the end of our conversation, the chief struck a much more sombre tone, as if regretful of the negative image he feared to have conveyed, and emphasised, ‘this town wouldn’t be the same without refugees. It was very small. Now, local people go to work in the camp, they bring their goats there, their firewood – they benefit’¹⁶. Kakuma town grew in parallel to the camp from a fairly insignificant 5,000 inhabitants in 1991 to around 40,000 in 2000 and over 65,000 in 2009 (Jamal 2000; KNBS 2009). Almost a natural separation between town and refugee camp is the seasonal Tarach river, a dry riverbed (*Lagga*) that intermittently turns into a torrential stream during rain falls further upstream on Uganda’s side of the border. The original camp Kakuma 1 was constructed in 1992

¹⁶ Interview, Kakuma, 26.11.2016.

on a peninsula between the banks of the Tarach in the East and the smaller Lodoket riverbed in the West (see Figure 2).

The initial dominance of the South Sudanese refugees made Kakuma a focal point for the political activities of the SPLA/M. Jansen speaks of a ‘rebelization’ of the camp because of the pervasive role which active, past, and potential future rebels played in its social and political life, with military commanders routinely crossing the border to visit their families and dependents who settled in the relative safety of the camp (Jansen 2011, 94; Schechter 2004). Humanitarian organisations often relied on cooperation from such political actors, as well as customary and religious authorities, to keep the camp operation running smoothly. On arrival, refugees were assigned their place of residence according to affiliation with ethnic or national ‘communities’. This fragmented the camp into semi-autonomous entities which, although nominally under the oversight of humanitarian agencies, were equally endowed with sweeping powers in terms of local governance and provision of justice. Camp management was *de facto* devolved to ‘community administrations’ which appointed their own councils of elders and followed their own customary law¹⁷, while the physical camp space was organised into ‘zones’ and ‘groups’ with a complementary lower tier in the leadership structure. Griek found an elaborate system of Sudanese ‘bench courts’ which functioned on multiple levels and mirrored the administrative division of the counties in Southern Sudan and hence determined their jurisdiction through both the suspect’s and claimant’s respective places of origin (Griek 2006). UNHCR provided limited training for bench court judges, who themselves represented a range of ethnic groups and locations and were only permitted to adjudicate on non-criminal offences (Crisp 2000; Verdirame 1999), though in reality their powers were often more far-reaching.

¹⁷ Document on LWF Kakuma Leadership Structure 1992-2012, undated.

One Dinka-Bor elder, Deng, explained that in those days the elders ‘were the ones with the power to cane anybody who made a mistake’¹⁸ and could even order the arrest and incarceration of suspects in community-owned jail cells in the camp (see also Schechter 2004, 299). As much as procedural public hearings were part and parcel of this justice system, Deng remembers that bench court judges ‘used to have “manpower”, which is about five people in each group who enforced the local rules’. Like in other refugee camps at the time, humanitarian governance in Kakuma was originally premised on the open toleration (if not encouragement) of legal pluralism, which fashioned it into a veritable mosaic of ‘pluralistic sovereigns and denizens’ (McConnachie 2014, 80; Costa 2006).

This became even more pronounced as the camp’s diversification continued during the 1990s. Thousands of Ethiopians, mostly Amhara and Oromo, had been relocated from the Walda refugee camp in Marsabit to Kakuma in 1993, and were among the first non-Sudanese to join the already sizable Dinka, Nuer and Equatorian communities¹⁹ that resided in the camp²⁰ (Risi 1993). While many of the Ethiopians had served in the army under the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam, others had fled the social devastation that accompanied the civil war²¹. Until today, Ethiopians have a recognisable presence in the camp through their ethno-national residential enclave of the popular ‘Ethiopian market’ which remains one of Kakuma’s economic centres.

¹⁸ Interview, Kakuma, 30.10.2016.

¹⁹ The geographical and administrative term ‘Equatoria’ harks back to the early period of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Since January 2017, this region has been subdivided into nine states (Tambura, Gbudwe, Maridi, Amadi, Terekeka, Yei River, Jubek, Imatong, Kapoeta). Many of the region’s local communities are agrarian as opposed to the predominantly pastoralist and numerically larger Nuer and Dinka. During the civil war that started in 2013, the Equatorian states have become the battlegrounds for some of the worst violence against civilian populations (see Justin and Van Leeuwen 2016; Jok 2011).

²⁰ Substantiated through an interview with an Ethiopian refugee from that period, 24.02.2017.

²¹ I have interviewed some Ethiopians from that generation, both of whom were former officers in the Ethiopian military. Interviews were conducted in Kakuma on 14.02.2017 and 01.08.2016. For another reference see (Jansen 2011, 92).

Around the same time, smaller groups of Ugandan Acholi and Langi refugees, who opposed the incoming new regime of Yoweri Museveni, settled nearby and formed the ‘Ugandan administration’ (see Jansen 2011). Eventually, when the many coastal camps near Mombasa and those located in the north-eastern periphery were closed between 1997-98, their 15,000 majority-Somali occupants were redistributed between the Dadaab and Kakuma camps (Schechter 2004, 91; Verdirame 1999; Grayson 2015, 91). Due to the discrimination which many Somali minorities, like the Bajuni and Barawa²² especially, had faced both in Somalia as well as in their Kenyan exile (see Hoehne 2015; Hill 2010), Kakuma became the preferred destination for their relocation and was consequently expanded in 1998 into a new camp section called ‘Kakuma 2’²³. Like Ethiopians and Ugandans before them, the Bajuni, Barawa and other minorities were progressively integrated into the existing camp administration framework and set up their own community leadership structures²⁴, local courts and recruited refugee security guards.

As a result of this mass relocation, Somalis quickly became the second most populous refugee group in the camp after the South Sudanese. George, a UNHCR official who has worked in the camp for more than twenty years, remembers that in 1999 heavy rains completely submerged one of the relocation zones in Kakuma 2 and made it uninhabitable. The UNHCR was forced to move 5,000 Somalis with lorries to a new vacant settlement area near the camp entrance in Kakuma 1. While hesitant at first, the relocatees quickly adjusted to this new reality and made use of

²² The Bajuni are a coastal fishing community with low social status in Somalia’s clan system. The Barawa are an urban coastal community with origins in the ethnically diverse mercantile classes in the city of Brava. For more in-depth information, see (Hill 2010).

²³ Interview, Kakuma, 21.07.2017.

²⁴ LWF official, Kakuma, 26.11.2016.

existing business networks to open shops and stalls, thereby giving birth to the ‘Somali market’ which would soon rival the economic position of Ethiopians.



Figure 5: Former cells of the ‘Sudanese Administration’, Kakuma 1 (source: author).

George recalls, ‘before that, the Ethiopian market was the place-to-be in the camp, but after the Bajuni and Barawa came, the Somali market became more popular and turned into the business hub of the camp’²⁵. In 2003, the Somali population increased once again when some 10,000 refugees from the marginalised ‘Somali Bantu’²⁶ community were brought to Kakuma from Dadaab in order to await their resettlement to the United States in the coming years (Schechter 2004, 91; Besteman

²⁵ Interview, Kakuma, 21.07.2017.

²⁶ ‘Somali Bantu’ populations are the descendants of slaves who were taken from the East African coast during the Indian ocean slave trade, mostly from present-day Tanzania, to work in agriculture in the riverine area between the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Somalia. Besteman provides a superb account of the ethnogenesis of ‘Somali Bantu’ identity and its operationalisation for humanitarian purposes since the start of the Somali civil war (see Besteman 2012).

2016). As space was scarce in light of these population influxes in rapid succession, the UNHCR opened yet another additional section called 'Kakuma 3' to the northwest of Kakuma 2 (see Figure 2). Moreover, as a result of the massive repatriation exercises for the Southern Sudanese between 2006 and 2008, and the prolonged arrival of relocatees from Dadaab, Somalis became (temporarily at least) the largest refugee group in the Kakuma camp (Grayson 2015, 90).

However, this would change yet again after civil war resumed in independent South Sudan in December 2013, when thousands of especially Nuer, many of whom were victimised as a result of factional divisions between President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar²⁷, were forced to flee. Yet for many of them, Kakuma was neither an unknown nor nondescript place but had featured in the flight stories of family members and friends who had escaped to Kenya in the preceding decades. At the outermost edge of Kakuma, where the iron-roofed camp borders the treeless desert, this new generation of refugees were settled in the 'New Area' which would later be officially designated as 'Kakuma 4'²⁸ (see Figure 2). This alternation and gradual diversification had ushered in a transformative process that changed not only the ethnic composition but, crucially, the social division of labour in the camp, as urban populations from centres like Mogadishu, Kismayo, Addis Ababa, Juba and Kampala had radically different lifestyles, social and financial capital from those who had previously lived in rural pastoralist or agricultural communities (see Jansen 2011, 154). Further, the large numbers of resettled refugees had been sending remittances to their relatives who had stayed behind, and thereby boosted both local markets and

²⁷ President Salva Kiir Mayardit belongs to the Dinka Bahr al-Ghazal whereas former VP Riek Machar is a Nuer and has a history of collaboration with the Khartoum government during the second Sudanese civil war.

²⁸ The population size of each camp section differs greatly: Kakuma 1 (62,115), Kakuma 2 (18,768), Kakuma 3 (42,097), and Kakuma 4 (21,634), statistics were provided by UNHCR's Kakuma HSO on 07.08.2017.

the ability of some refugees to invest in small or even medium-sized businesses (Horst 2006; Jansen 2008, 2018).

Besides restrictions which nurtured an atmosphere of confinement in the eyes of refugees like Asfaw, the camp was also a ‘university’ that could offer a wealth of formal and informal lessons for those making it their transitory home. Far from being ‘only a community of existence’ (Agier 2011, 16; see also Hyndman 2000, 139–40) for those unfortunates who had to flee war and disaster and now inadvertently share a living space, Kakuma had instead woven the lives of thousands of people together. Today it is home to a plethora of communities with rather eclectic identities between ethnicity, nationality, administrative units, and not least a rather ambiguous sense of ‘refugeeness’ (Malkki 1996). In camps along the Thai-Burma border, McConnachie argued accordingly that ‘membership is not discreet and exclusive but can exist in co-extensive overlapping scales’ (McConnachie 2014, 41). In 2012, a Japanese UNHCR official initiated the reform of administrative structures in the camp, moving away from governance rooted in ethno-national ‘communities’ to multi-ethnic and multi-national constituencies, the so-called ‘Blocks’²⁹. The ‘Block System’ was nominally adopted to ‘democratise’ the management of the camp and allow residents to elect leaders on the grounds of their places of residence in the camp rather than ethnicity³⁰.

But despite the intense efforts of international organisations to reconfigure the camp into a space of shared governance under the patronage of the UNHCR and the Kenyan state (McConnachie 2014, 41; Sagy 2008), top-down order-making remains always necessarily provisory and is subject to the lived experiences and unchecked place-making practices of refugees. While ‘Blocks’ and ‘Zones’ have thus indeed been

²⁹ Interview with UNHCR Field Unit officer who has been stationed in Kakuma since 1996, 21.07.2017.

³⁰ Document: The Constitution of Kakuma Refugee Camp, November 2011.

incorporated into the everyday parlance and imaginative universe of camp residents, some places and neighbourhoods have attracted more colloquial and idiosyncratic naming as ‘a way of contesting and challenging the initial allocation of space by humanitarian agencies’ (Jansen 2011, 122). The most prominent examples for this re-appropriation of space are areas like Zones 3-4 in Kakuma 1, popularly known as ‘Hong Kong’, and a number of blocks in Zone 2 of Kakuma 1 called ‘Baghdad’³¹, but also includes a mosque in Kakuma 3 which is widely referred to as the ‘Al-Shabaab Mosque’ (*Msikiti wa Al-Shabaab*): infamous as a consequence of the influence ‘Islamic fundamentalist’ preachers are believed to have in its running³². From the inception of Kakuma as a virtual bastion of South Sudanese in northern Kenya, it has evolved into a truly cosmopolitan camp whose *lingua franca* is Kiswahili and where the ethnic parcelling of space has been mitigated through additional layers of governance and belonging, without being erased. Considering Asfaw’s insistence upon Kakuma as a prison and a university, it is telling that Kakuma was recently chosen as the site for an actual institution of higher education, namely the new ‘Turkana West University’ whose construction commenced in February 2018³³ (UNHCR 2018c). This raises the possibility that the exceptional space of Kakuma camp is perhaps slowly, tacitly, but certainly not wholeheartedly, being incorporated as a more permanent part of Kenya. The sudden erection of wooden power poles straddling the main road in Kakuma 1 before Christmas 2016, and the ensuing electrification of this camp section through

³¹ The name ‘Hong Kong’ became widely used because of the popularity of East Asian martial arts films among Dinka youth during the 1990s. ‘Baghdad’ has a reputation for alcohol- and drug-related violence and was therefore compared to the Iraqi capital in terms of danger and insecurity (see also Schechter, 2004, 332; Jansen 2011, 122).

³² Interviews with UNHCR Head of Security, 27.01.2017; CPPT, Kakuma 1, 01.03.2017; CPPT Kakuma 3 16.05.2017.

³³ Masinde Muliro University in Kakamega has already been running a Kakuma campus for some years, and will also be one of the institutions to partner with the Turkana County Government and UNHCR in administering the new university.

a mini-grid, would indeed support this interpretation and speaks volumes about the discrepancy between the Kenyan state's exclusionary rhetoric and its actual practices. Considering the government's more hard-line stance towards Dadaab, however, even this positive development remains contingent and insecure. Until the formal closure announcement in 2016, Nairobi's Kenyatta University maintained a satellite campus near the camps before they were ordered to discontinue the operation.

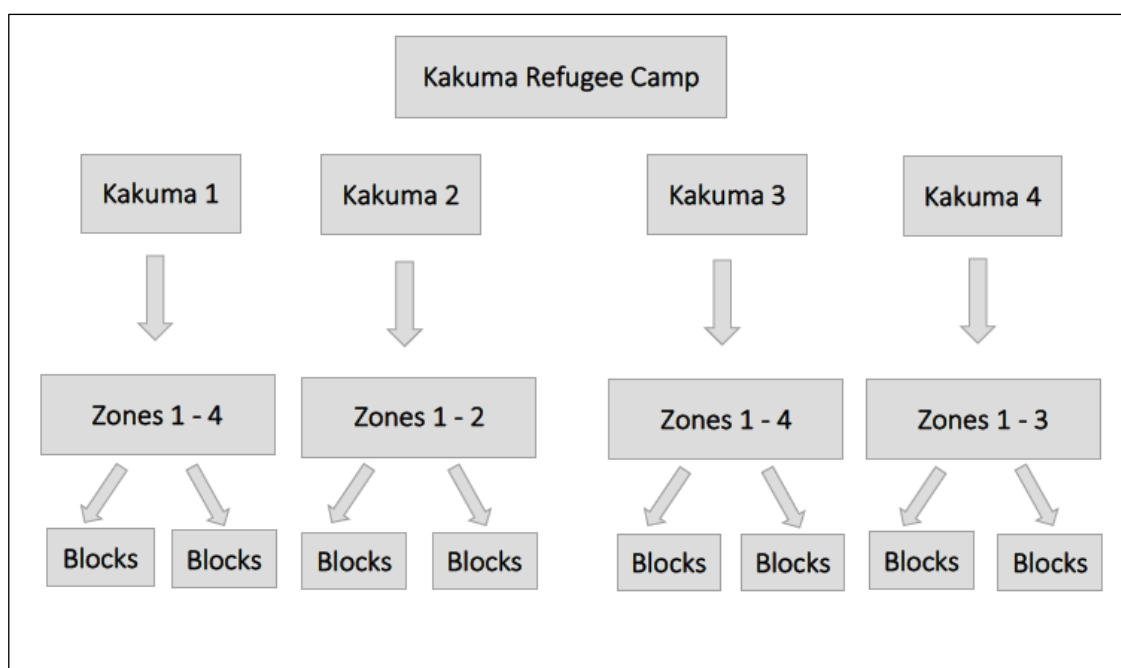


Figure 6: Administrative units of Kakuma refugee camp since 2012 (source: author).

‘Hakuna security nusu’: protection, crime, and security in Kakuma³⁴

‘We play with other things, but we don’t play with security’ declared an LWF official boldly at a security briefing during my first visit to Kakuma in 2015³⁵. Questions of security are popular subjects of conversation and fierce debate in reference to refugee

³⁴ ‘Hakuna security nusu’ is Swahili mixed with English meaning ‘there is no half-security’, Interview, Kakuma, 02.03.2015.

³⁵ Ibid.

camps, perhaps not least because ‘protection’ is seen as the heart of the humanitarian enterprise (Betts, Loescher, and Milner 2012). UNHCR hence regards the personal security and inviolacy of refugees as ‘an essential element of international protection’ (UNHCR 2003, 153). Senior protection staff in Kakuma and Nairobi thus repeatedly stressed that legal and physical protection from harm were indivisible³⁶. The LWF official’s self-portrayal as a no-nonsense crime fighter fits into the widespread image of camps as ‘places of insecurity and outright danger’ (Jacobsen 1999, 2). Over the span of its life, Kakuma is said to have suffered influxes of illicit arms from militaries and rebels across the border in Ethiopia, Uganda, and South Sudan, and experienced spiralling levels of crime related to the proliferation of business rivalries and periodic inter-communal conflict³⁷. In the UNHCR guide on operational protection in camps and settlements worldwide, the agency stipulates that,

Crimes committed in camp settings can range from petty theft of material assistance to physical assault to rape and to murder. Such offences rise due to the breakdown of traditional community and social structures, impacted by the population density of camps, the limited privacy available, and the cohabitation of people and groups previously unknown to each other. Mechanisms for redress, for victim protection, for fair hearings and appropriate punishment are both necessary but often inadequate. (UNHCR 2006b, 27)

In the Kenyan camps specifically, Crisp cites a whole panoply of insecurities arising from crimes that include rape and abuse, armed robbery, inter- and intra-communal strife, petty theft, road banditry and other ‘harmful practices’ (Crisp 2000). Especially the pervasiveness of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as a usual by-product

³⁶ This is based on an interview with a senior UNHCR protection officer in Nairobi on 30.03.2017, and e-mail correspondence with another protection officer on 21.01.2017.

³⁷ These are recurrent narratives that many informants would commonly use to explain the waxing and waning of crime levels as well as the availability of weapons in the camp. However, the question of crime remains highly contentious and police statistics are neither readily accessible nor fully reliable.

of protracted displacement is perhaps one of the best documented types of insecurities in the Kakuma and other camps (Horn 2010; Mwangi 2012; Nilsson 2013; Buckley-Zistel and Krause 2017). Naturally, the notion of crime is always relational and refers to breaches of particular moral rules that are enshrined in laws (Wikström 2008, 120). But verifying the frequency, circumstances, and genuineness of individual protection claims is not as straightforward in camp settings like Kakuma because the prospect of third country resettlement can turn situations of risk and threat into an opportunity for manipulation (Jansen 2008, 583). A Somali refugee even remarked sarcastically that ‘there are so many “wonderful” rules in this camp! Seventy percent of refugees don’t follow them at all; the other thirty percent occasionally try’³⁸.

Meanwhile, government officials and humanitarians have adopted the term ‘fake insecurities’³⁹ to express their suspicions of fraudulence towards criminal cases that are reported in the camp, which has consequently undermined the credibility of individual refugee when seeking assistance from UNHCR or the state. ‘Protection’ has therefore become a moving target for refugees trying to conform to the shifting categories of what legitimately counts as an ‘insecurity’ (Ikanda 2018, 393). UNHCR itself provides a range of *ad hoc* protection options, the most common of which is the protection in a fenced-off ‘protection area’ in Kakuma 3 (see Figure 2), relocation to Nairobi in severe cases of imminent threat to their life or even resettlement to a third country, that is subject to permanently changing resettlement quotas⁴⁰. Even though a not insignificant portion of insecurity cases may indeed be fabricated, it is hard to imagine that it could eclipse the genuine perils which camp residents face. Kakuma’s public prosecutor noted that perhaps as much as 10 percent of prosecuted crimes fall

³⁸ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 05.03.2015.

³⁹ The term was repeatedly used in conversations and interviews with police, NGO workers, and UN officials, some examples include 28.09.2016, 01.02.2017, 16.05.2017, 20.07.2017.

⁴⁰ Interview with officer from UNHCR Protection Unit, Kakuma, 28.07.2017.

under the category of robbery with violence, 20 percent under rape and defilement, while assault cases accounted for over 50 percent of serious crimes⁴¹. Official crime statistics for Turkana-West which I obtained from the Kakuma police show no clear overall trend in the past four years, with a marked decrease in assault cases between 2015 and 2016 which may also be due to low reporting. Despite this indeed worrying disaggregation, the subcounty police chief for Turkana-West admitted that annual crime rates for the camp itself were rather unexceptional for an urban agglomeration of its size⁴¹.

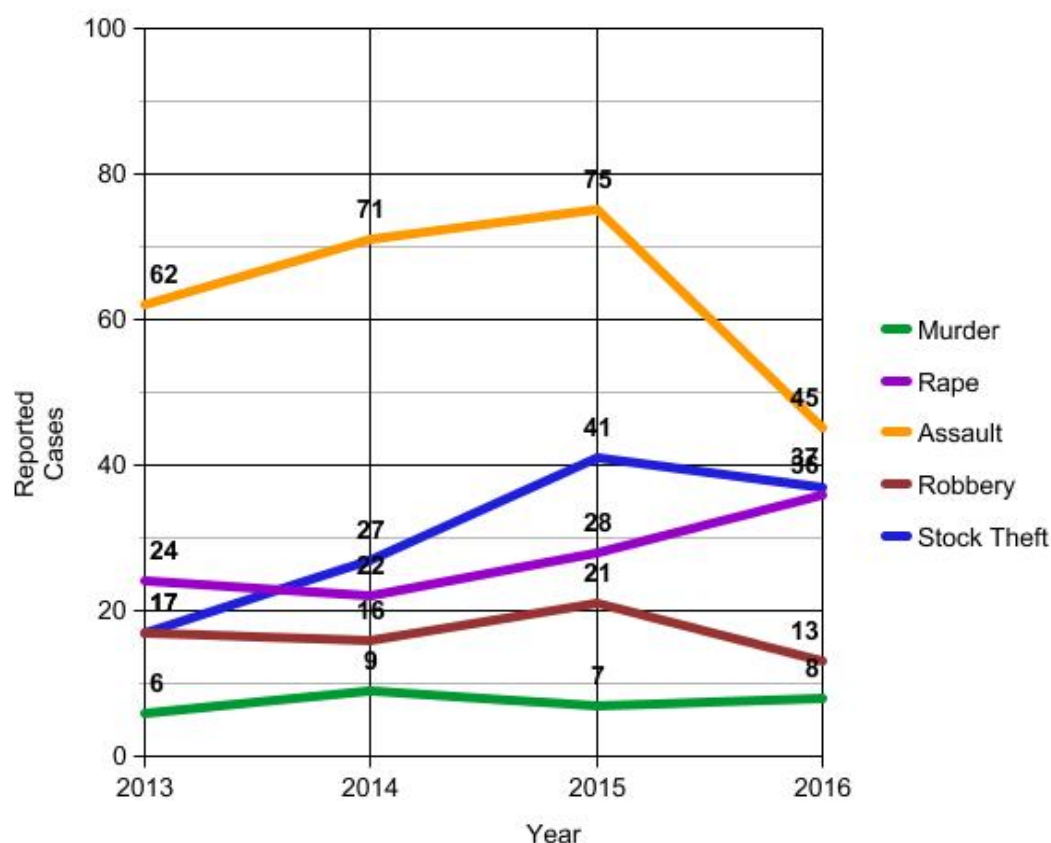


Figure 7: Crime rates for Turkana-West, 2013-2016 (source: author/Kenya Police)⁴².

⁴¹ Interview with OCPD, 02.03.2017; as well as official police crime statistics for Turkana-West from 2013-2017.

⁴² The graph was created by the author using data generously provided by the Kenya Police Service (KPS) in Kakuma.

Policing and justice are typically areas of social ordering that are shared by a plurality of actors in the camp. Besides informal and customary authorities, so-called ‘councils of elders’, watch groups, and privately-employed night guards, the Kenyan state and international aid organisations are among those institutions most involved in security provisions and practices in Kakuma. ‘Policing’ is a social function that can alternate between organised crime fighting and the maintenance of public order. Broadly, it is a set of practices aimed at producing social control through ‘systems of surveillance coupled with the threat of sanctions for discovered deviance’ (Reiner 2010, 5). These vary substantially from the violent deployment of state power in suppressing dissent and opposition to locally-organised and legitimated forms of civil protection work on the local level (Yarwood and Paasche 2015; Baker 2010; Bowling and Foster 2002).

Although the Camp Manager is not formally involved in enforcement in the refugee camp, he is a member of the Turkana-West Security Committee⁴³ and holds considerable sway over the police and the other arms of state security⁴⁴. The Kenya Police Service (KPS) acts as the lead policing agency and is headed by the Officer Commanding Police Division (OCPD) as the highest-ranking law enforcement officer in the Turkana-West subcounty. In contrast to the 1990s and the early 2000s, criminal matters are now handled almost exclusively by the Kenya Police Service in conjunction with the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) and the local Magistrate Court. Day-to-day police operations are coordinated by the Officer Commanding the Station (OCS) who makes strategic decisions about deployments and the use of force, which leaves the OCPD in the largely administrative capacity of, as one government

⁴³ The sub-county security committee is headed by the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC) for Turkana-West and also comprises the OCPD, the DAPC, the OCS, members of the NIS branch, and the camp manager.

⁴⁴ Interviews with camp manager, Kakuma, 27.01.2017, and OCPD 02.03.2017.

official pejoratively remarked, a ‘paper pusher’⁴⁵. As chief of Kakuma police station, the OCS and his subordinate officers deal with the bulk of the reported cases and are the only police branch allowed to operate permanent jail cells and to hand over cases to the public prosecutor. An additional branch of the KPS is the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) of whom there are 10 officers stationed in a base between ‘Hong Kong’ and Kakuma 2 (see Figure 2), and who have gained camp- and nation-wide notoriety for their relentless and brutal policing tactics against protesters and unrest⁴⁶. As a result of the inaccessibility of Turkana as a peripheral frontier area with frequent cross-border raids and armed incursions, the OCPD further holds command over the National Police Reserve (NPR), a local armed auxiliary defence force supporting the regular Kenyan police with reconnaissance, in-depth knowledge of the rural margins, and occasional firepower (Mkutu 2015; Mkutu and Wandera 2013). In spite of their usual deployment outside of the urban centre of Kakuma, NPRs have in recent years been increasingly used as tactical reinforcements for larger operations in the refugee camp⁴⁷.

The second police branch is the paramilitary Administration Police Service (APS) which is led by the Divisional Administration Police Commander (DAPC). Historically, the Administration Police reflected the administrative bifurcation of the Kenyan colonial state in which African subjects were policed separately through the so-called ‘Tribal Police’ in designated reserves. Since 1958, when it was renamed the ‘Administration Police’, this police force was under the control of the provincial and

⁴⁵ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 17.02.2017.

⁴⁶ Interviews with refugees, Kakuma, 24.05.2017; 23.11.2016; and NGO workers, 27.01.2017; 20.07.2017; The GSU was also at the forefront of government repression in the aftermath of the 2017 elections, see HRW/AI 2017.

⁴⁷ Interview with OCPD, Kakuma, 02.03.2017; Interviews with NPR senior officers, Kakuma, 02.06.2017 and 26.05.2017.

local authorities and gained a long-standing reputation as ‘Chief’s Police’⁴⁸. Although the Kenyan police services have been under the unified institutional umbrella of the National Police Service (NPS) since the advent of police reforms in 2011⁴⁹, the KPS commanders like the OCPD and OCS take hierarchical primacy in the coordination of enforcement operations and the processing of cases, often earning the APS in the eyes of some observers the unfavourable reputation as the ‘Assistant Police Service’⁵⁰. The third official branch of the police is the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) that deals with the investigation of serious crimes like homicides, phone fraud, organised crime but also threats of terrorism through their specialised Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU). Counter-terrorism is also the primary reason why the National Intelligence Service (NIS) has upgraded its own physical presence in Kakuma refugee camp, ostensibly with undercover agents and informants among the refugees⁵¹. The remarkable secrecy which shrouds the world of policing and security inside the camp makes estimates about the precise number of security and police personnel uncertain, if not impossible. However, official sources suggest that there are at least 196 regular police officers in Kakuma with as many as 657 NPRs scattered in the surrounding Turkana areas (UNHCR 2016)⁵².

While UNHCR has long supported Kenya’s refugee camp police operations, it only formalised this cooperation by signing the Security Partnership Project (SPP) in 2011. Kenya’s military invasion of Somalia in the course of the same year, and the

⁴⁸ This is information taken from the former (and now defunct) website of the Administration Police and from numerous conversations with Kenyan officials who attest to the role the AP continues to play in Kenyan society. (see also Nyabola 2016).

⁴⁹ Kenya’s police reform process was initiated through recommendations in the ‘Waki commission’ and the ‘Ransley report’ following the complicity of police officers in committing crimes during the 2007/08 post-election violence. For more on the reform process see AI 2013; Osse 2014; Ruteere 2011.

⁵⁰ Interview, Kakuma, 27.01.2017.

⁵¹ Informal conversation with NIS officer, Kakuma, 10.02.2017.

⁵² Interview with OCPD, Kakuma, 02.03.2017.

violent backlash it created through a rise of abductions and attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in and around the Dadaab refugee camps, the SPP promised to ‘reinforce the security environment in the refugee camps and surrounding hosting areas with an enhanced police presence as well as through community policing’ (UNHCR 2012, 3). The project stipulated substantial UN subsidies for Kenyan police facilities and acquisition of vehicles, as well as special allowances for police officers serving in the camps to reduce their incentives for corruption and misconduct⁵³ (see Chapter 4). However, humanitarian agencies have long been involved more directly in managing camp security. ‘Refugee guards’ under the authority of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) were essential to the administration of Kakuma camp from the beginning and were chosen as proxies to enhance ‘protection’ and crime reporting in the camp (Crisp 2000; Schechter 2004; Verdirame 1999) (Chapter 5 for a detailed account). LWF still retains the Peace and Security portfolio in Kakuma that includes both a semi-professionalised successor organisation of ‘refugee guards’, Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs), and a Peacebuilding Unit that employs social workers who deal with individual cases of insecurity and feed into the UNHCR’s protection channels⁵⁴. CPPTs are the policing arm of the organisation tasked with the apprehension, reporting and resolution of low-level conflicts, in addition to crowd control during food distribution, sports matches, and public events. The CPPTs have a security office in every part of the camp and nominally liaise with the Kenyan police agencies and, at least in the view of humanitarians, thus provide a first line of refugee protection in the local blocks and neighbourhoods⁵⁵.

⁵³ Interview, Head of UNHCR Protection in Kenya, Nairobi, 30.03.2017.

⁵⁴ Interview, Head of LWF Peace and Security, Kakuma, 19.01.2017.

⁵⁵ This point was repeatedly stressed by their Kenyan supervisors in trainings, meetings, and discussions on security in the camp, for example on 26.01.2016 and 03.04.2017. (see also Brankamp 2016a).

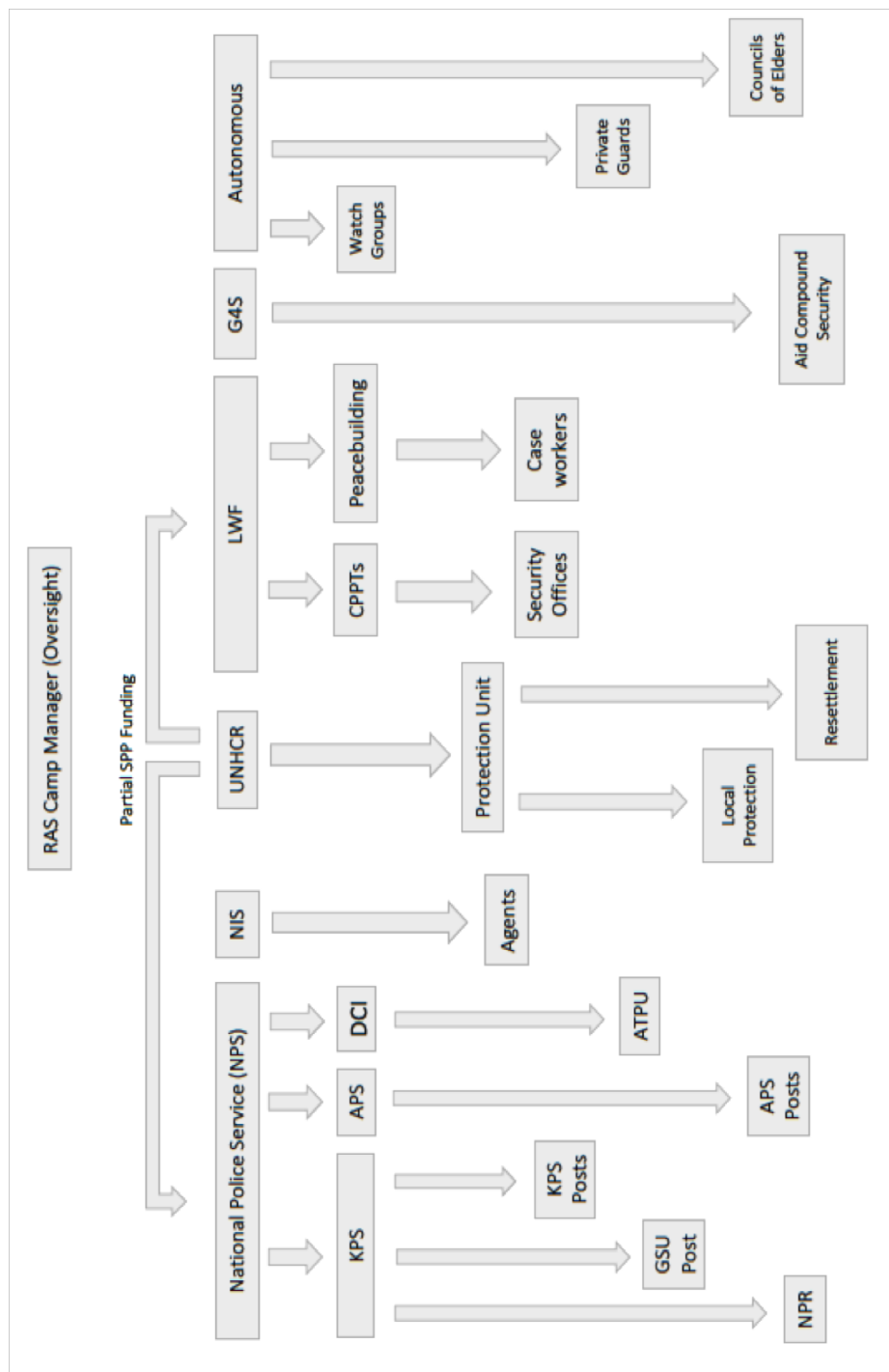


Figure 8: Basic outline of security structures in Kakuma camp (source: author).

Research aims, objectives, and contributions

This thesis lies at the interface of political geography and area studies. It hence seeks to engage not only with the disciplinary debates on space and power but also attends to regional-specific concerns about the singularity of local contexts, representations, and knowledge(s) (Jazeel 2018). Humanitarianism is a morally charged project that vacillates between alleviation of hardship and re-inscribing further violence. Perhaps nowhere is this more pronounced than in the global archipelago of camps that houses millions of displaced people and appears as a beacon of protection, safety and peace. The aims of this study comprise an attempt (i) to chart the power matrix that connects the political technology of the camp with policing practices in Kenya more broadly, (ii) to thereby unpack the relationship between violence and humanitarianism as a fraught moral project, and finally (iii) to tease out the forms of coloniality which are structurally embedded within it. In so doing, I work towards a holistic understanding of policing refugees in camps that is attentive to the spectral power relations emerging from a combination of spatial tactics of exclusion, governmental transference, as well as the discursive forms of violence that are inflicted on (often racialised and gendered) non-citizens in the everyday. My analysis demonstrates that instead of viewing these as inadmissible or (potentially) accidental infractions of the humanitarian enterprise, they are systemically encoded in the wider geographies of humanitarian enforcement (see Chapter 3). The following three research objectives are designed as specific lenses to think through each facet of this study and which map onto the empirical chapters that form the heart of the thesis.

1. To investigate the relation between humanitarianism and violence in Kenya by focusing on how policing undergirds encampment in Kakuma refugee camp.

This research objective contributes to ongoing debates on humanitarian violence (Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015; Weizman 2011; Slim 2001; Branch 2009; Lopez 2015; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010) by concretising the everyday spatial production of violence in titular spaces of protection and aid. It also intervenes in the literature on the geographies of the camp (Ramadan 2012; Minca 2015; Oesch 2017; Diken and Laustsen 2006; Edkins 2000; Martin 2015) by asserting that the exceptional properties of camps in fact reproduce those that emerge under military occupation and emergency rule. This objective examines how humanitarianism conjoins with the forces of state violence in producing spatial systems of control over non-citizen populations in Kenya.

2. To examine community policing as a technology of government through which different authorities seek to instil particular rationalities and logics in refugees.

This objective focuses on mechanisms of governmental control that are presented as instruments of empowerment (if not liberation) for the disenfranchised and the displaced, but again re-inscribe forms of institutional subjection. It contributes to a growing literature on forms of community policing and local security provision in Africa (Kyed 2010; Buur and Jensen 2004; Brogden and Nijhar 2005; Baker 2010; Skilling 2016; Kyed and Albrecht 2015) and simultaneously challenges the dominant assumptions about the 'liberal' character of humanitarian governance (Hyndman 2000; Bulley 2014; Jaji 2012; Lippert 1999; Sagy 2008; Agier 2011). This objective probes into different constructions of the 'refugee community' as a serviceable vehicle for channeling both humanitarian and state power.

3. To explore the imaginative geographies of humanitarianism through the local discursive practices of camp administrators towards refugee populations.

This objective examines popular imaginations of crisis and vulnerability as well as threat and disorder which pervade the social world of the camp. Representations of space have an immediate bearing on modes of governance and the subjectivities of affected populations. This aspect of the study contributes to the scarce debates on the imaginative geographies of humanitarian aid (Rajaram 2002; Olivius 2015; Turner 2004; Nyers 2006; Fassin 2001; Hyndman 1998; Balaji 2011; Daley 2013b) and links them to analytical frames concerned with the postcolonial production of 'otherness' and difference (Mbembe 2017; Bhabha 2004; Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006; Said 1994; Mudimbe 1988). In going beyond a narrow focus on crime fighting, mobility control, and public security provision, this objective aims to explore the subliminal cultural text that provides a justificatory foundation for refugee encampment and the enforcement of humanitarian order.

Thesis Outline

This doctoral thesis comprises a total of seven chapters. Three of those chapters form the substantive core of the study and were written in the format of articles that have been submitted to academic journals (Chapters 4-6). It is through the specific lens of each of these articles/chapters that the thesis addresses the research objectives and elaborates on the different facets of *Policing the camp*. As a result, these chapters were designed to not only complement one another in the framework of this book-length thesis, but also suffice as stand-alone articles that can reach a broader readership in the sub-fields of Political Geography and African Studies. This has automatically led to some negligible degree of repetition in presenting the research context, literature

reviews, and methodologies in each article/chapter which readers of this thesis will already be familiar with. Despite this minor drawback, the article format offers the advantage of exploring the subject of policing in humanitarian camps through three distinct angles that ultimately reflect the methodologically inductive nature of forging original ethnographic research into a coherent whole.

Chapter Two attends to methodological questions around the study of policing and refugee camps. It first delves into the epistemological groundings of this research in critical ethnography and political geography of postcolonial African societies and further elaborates on the grounded approaches which have been used to analyse and theorise the gathered information. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the challenges of accessing and entering ‘the field’ before reflecting on my own positionality and the inevitable limitations I encountered in my interactions with interlocutors. Finally, it elaborates on both the ethics and practical methods which were used to conduct the research. *Chapter Three* develops the geographies of humanitarian enforcement as the overarching conceptual framework for this study and identifies the main bodies of literature that it contributes and speaks to. It first sets out by discussing the paradoxes encapsulated in humanitarianism as a moral project before considering in detail how this is compounded by the policing of migration across border, urban and detention spaces. Further, the chapter contends that there has been an insufficient engagement of scholarship on camp geographies with manifestations of state power and proposes an analytical disaggregation of the political technology of the camp into the banal and grounded practices that *produce* its exclusionary effects.

Chapter Four (or Article 1)⁵⁶ uses debates on the geographies of occupation to rethink militarised policing as the underbelly of humanitarian governance in Kakuma

⁵⁶ This article has already been published in Political Geography (see Brankamp 2019).

refugee camp. Through an inductive enquiry into how the camp is spatially organised this chapter draws crucial parallels between this archetypical space of humanitarian aid and zones under military occupation which share a similar spatial assemblage of violence expressed through architecture, bureaucracy, physical force and resource extraction to control subject populations. The chapter shows that camps and enclave spaces continue to be pivotal spatial formations for governing unwanted populations in both the colonial past and present. *Chapter Five* (or Article 2)⁵⁷ looks at the strategic mobilisation of refugees themselves for performing local protection work through the vehicle of community policing. However, instead of reinforcing liberal narratives of self-regulation and empowerment, this chapter focuses on community policing as a contested technology of government in the camp which is equally infused with liberal humanitarian and more illiberal governmental logics linked to the patronage of the Kenyan state. It contends that the limitations that arose from counter-organisations in the camp are not an outright negation of these governmental powers but rationalise the continuing institutional interest in domesticating seemingly illegible and complex forms of particularist social networks.

Chapter Six (or Article 3)⁵⁸ explores the cultural text that underwrites systems of governance and policing in the refugee camp. Precisely, it examines how everyday discourses of ‘otherness’, that circulate among camp administrators and are directed at the encamped populations, shape the attitudes and actions of government officials and agency staff while re-articulating both the colonality of global humanitarianism and Kenya’s domestic geographies of power. This illuminates not only imaginative dimensions of humanitarian governance but at the same time engages long-standing

⁵⁷ This article is a revised manuscript that has been submitted to the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*.

⁵⁸ This article has been submitted to *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*.

debates on politics of territoriality, belonging, and exclusion in postcolonial African societies. The series of arguments presented throughout this thesis are indicative of the plurality of spatial, governmental and discursive relations which form the bedrock of policing processes in the camp. *Chapter Seven* (Conclusion) pushes this even further and confronts coloniality, as expressed through enduring relations of marginality, exclusion and subjection which continue to underlie the policing of refugees today. It concludes that humanitarian governance, in particular at the political margins of the world, has an indisputably illiberal disposition that often blurs the lines between protective and punitive work. Ultimately, it suggests that conceptualising the refugee camp as a political technology of policing requires a recognition of the practices and banal violence that street-level officers, aid workers, bureaucrats, and administrators routinely perform.

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CHAPTER TWO

An Ethnography of Policing and Encampment in Kakuma



Figure 9: Panoramic view from a water tank in Kakuma 4 (source: author).

Introduction

The wind is relentless and lashes fine dust into our eyes as we approach a shallow ditch a few hundred metres from the last houses in Block 9, Kakuma 4. The lifeless body of Lorot, one of the many Turkana who routinely frequent the camp, was dumped here the day before and his tormentors dug a hole the size of his head, so that the blood gashing from his wounds would be collected in a puddle underneath. I am with Michael and Gai, two Nuer refugees who work as security officers for the Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs), a refugee-staffed community

policing initiative that operates in the camp. When we arrive at the scene, Lorot's corpse has already been removed by the Kenyan police, leaving the dug-out hole and blood stains on the sand as sole traces of the brutal crime. We are soon joined by two Kenyan CPPT supervisors (CPPAs), one of whom has already been at the scene the previous day and explains how Lorot was found, demonstrating in (for my taste) grim detail where on the ground the deceased's feet and head had rested. For the first CPPA the case is rather clear: Lorot must have been killed in the refugee community of Block 9, temporarily stored in a well or even a private home before being brought to this place in the bushlands surrounding the camp under cover of darkness. His colleagues and I are speculating about this hypothesis, but he remains adamant and convinced of it. However, his CPPA colleague shrugs her shoulders, turns to me and whispers secretively: 'it's always good to not make up your mind too quickly and consider all options. That's what an investigation is all about'⁵⁹.

Heeding this prudent call for the purpose of my own research, while generating 'data' from real-life encounters and experiences of people around me, was often an exercise in patience – tedious, usually non-linear in its course and sometimes taking rather unexpected turns. Or, as a young Ethiopian informant of mine put it when musing about the longevity of doctoral studies: 'to get a good thing needs a process.; a bad thing you will get immediately'⁶⁰. In spite of the spectacular nature of some cases I witnessed, like the murder of Lorot or organised police raids, policing the camp was often enough a mundane, routine, and monotonous task for those involved. Although this thesis makes use of a great number of vignettes, quotes, and memorable voices to illustrate how 'order' is created and enforced in the

⁵⁹ Taken from fieldnotes, 10.11.2016, Kakuma.

⁶⁰ Kakuma, 30.07.2017.

humanitarian space of the camp, it is also worth remembering the countless uneventful hours of fruitless observations, aimless waiting, excessive note taking, and intellectual *cul-de-sacs* that are inevitably part of, if not central to, any ethnographic study. Having initially set out to study community policing among Kakuma's refugees, over time the scope of my research became gradually broader, as I realised that without closer examination of Kenyan police operations in the camp, I would omit the necessary context which structured both the community policing programme and the camp's social fabric more generally. Striking this delicate balance between 'drilling deep while scanning broadly' (Landau 2015, 61), as is the predicament of most ethnographic enquiries, posed inescapable challenges. Often, the lines between important observations and trivial details are blurry, and only through the inductive fieldwork process itself did my thinking assume more discernible shape. Further, navigating the typically unpredictable nature of the 'field', its protagonists, and at first hidden fault lines was a taxing endeavour which required the laborious ability to listen, think, reflect, critique, honour and, of course, empathise with interlocutors on multiple levels. This chapter hence aims at unpacking these methodological, epistemological, and ethical considerations of my ethnography on policing and humanitarian encampment in Kakuma.

In the first section, I focus on the epistemological orientation of this thesis in (critical) ethnography, sensitivity toward the political geography of Africa's postcolonial present, and grounded approaches to theory. I elucidate how through the course of the research process, the continuities and discontinuities of humanitarianism in Kenya with colonial experiences became increasingly conspicuous and have shaped the ways I came to see and conceptualise policing in the camp. In the second section, I address the limitations of seeing and being 'in the

field', especially with respect to my own positionality, the bureaucratic machinations of being granted or denied study access, and modes of conducting ethnography and qualitative research. A third section deals with the idiosyncrasies of studying refugees and policing, the climate of suspicion which governs the refugee camp as well as avenues for ethical research. The fourth section turns towards the practical methods of *doing* research through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys, and critically reflects on the analysis and writing process 'after fieldwork'.

Epistemologies: ethnography, the postcolony, and inductive theory

The best thing would be to write down everything that happens from day to day. To keep a diary in order to understand. To neglect no nuances or little details, even if they seem unimportant, and above all to classify them. I must say how I see this table, the street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since *these* are the things which have changed. I must fix the exact extent and nature of this change. (Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, 1975, 9)

Ethnography

Despite their obvious centrality for adjacent disciplines such as anthropology, ethnographic approaches have long been considered marginal in political geography. Megoran contends that reasons for this include the glaring differences in the anthropological and geographical fieldwork traditions and the limited diffusion of critical methodological debates between the two (Megoran 2006, 627). Because of the subfield's interest in the multifaceted connections between politics, space and power, this is perhaps even more surprising, since ethnography's stated aim is not seldom to '[explore] the tissue of everyday life to reveal the processes and meanings which undergird social action, and which enable order to be reproduced and sometimes challenged' (Herbert 2000, 551). Due to the inherent socio-spatial

dimension of the ethnographic process, which scales up from the filigree of everyday life to the more macrostructures that surround it, growing numbers of political geographers have embraced methods like participant observation, immersion in local contexts, and the acquisition of vernacular languages and codes as invaluable for knowledge production in the discipline (Martin 2015; Shewly 2013; Reeves 2011; McConnell 2013; Mountz 2003; Murrey 2015). As opposed to the somewhat bleak picture that Herbert and Megoran once painted (Herbert 2000; Megoran 2006), ethnography indeed seems to enjoy unprecedented popularity in disciplinary research on the politics of space, (b)orders, power, and mobility.

Despite important debates that have questioned the concepts of territory, place, and 'rootedness' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1995; Malkki 1992; Elden 2010; Elden 2013; Mountz 2013; Sidaway 2003), many ethnographic studies still *take place* in concrete, physical settings. Didier Fassin insists that it rests on three methodological pillars: long-term presence in 'the field', intimate knowledge of the spaces and their populations, and lastly, a familiarisation with the local symbolic order which is knitted into the social fabric (Fassin 2017b, 5). This methodological triumvirate has often elicited charges of undue particularism against ethnographers, who contend in turn that 'in the particularity of the local, lurk social forces of larger scale' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003, 151). While it is true that ethnography probes into particular and perhaps selected slices of reality, with their singular habits, norms, and rhythms of everyday life, it simultaneously seeks to see them as nested in a broader web of interrelated social processes that cut across various scales from the global to the local and the intimate body. Herbert hence notes, 'if sociality and spatiality are intertwined, and if the exploration of this connection is a goal of geography, then more ethnography is necessary' (Herbert 2000, 564).

My research accepts this invitation for strengthening the role of ethnography in human geography, especially since it has proven incredibly propitious in exposing the social forces at play in refugee camps and other contexts of long-term displacement (Malkki 1995; Turner 2010; Jansen 2018; Horst 2006; Agier 2011). Through ethnography, researchers aim to participate in the daily routines of the people they study, while making sense of behaviours and lived experiences in a more structured and analytical fashion. In a sense, the ‘world of everyday life’ (Jorgensen 1989, 15) thereby becomes a rich source of empirical information for the ethnographer whose challenging task is to order, analyse, and eventually de-code its meanings through interpretation. Like Antoine Roquentin, the tragic protagonist of Sartre’s *Nausea*, whose senses are intolerably sharpened as he incrementally comes to terms with his condition of existence, these twirled cadences of everyday life are usually at the heart of the ethnographic process. Crucially, however, critical ethnographic work engages directly with the narratives, stories, and perspectives of people themselves and is reflexive about their view of the research itself, its objectives, and further implications. Soyini Madison speaks about this critical ethnographic endeavour as a kind of human *caravan* which fosters the ‘dialogic performative as a generative and embodied reciprocity’ (Madison 2006, 321) as long as ‘we pay attention to the collaborations and motions that generate them’ (Madison 2006, 323).

My fieldwork in the Kakuma refugee camp is perhaps best understood as a variation of ‘deep hanging out’ (Clifford 1996, 5, quoting Renato Rosaldo), a term which encapsulates both the aspirational intensity and the unembellished, mundane and possible uneventfulness of the research routine. By ‘hanging out’ deeply and extensively with my interlocutors, I was able to witness key moments of interaction, affect, and the rhythms of their days, even when nothing formally ‘noteworthy’

seemed to occur. These banal moments are often revealing for a particular place or social interaction and offer sensitive cues about what may otherwise get lost in the turbulences and noise of the intermittent spectacles. More than anything, an ethnography of this kind hinges on the researcher's amicability towards their informants and the places they inhabit, time investment, personal trust, relatability, and critical reflections on the asymmetrical power relations involved. By virtue of the unpredictability of outcomes and the constant progression of deeper entanglements with, and responsibilities towards, the research context, ethnography therefore remains fundamentally an 'intense epistemological trial by fire' (Van Maanen 2011, ix).

Political geography and the African postcolony

Eurocentric theorisations often continue to treat Africa's social worlds as 'reservoirs of raw fact' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2015, p. 1). Subverting and disrupting these epistemologies with a perhaps more empirically-grounded, critical and reflective use of theory, which is at once sensitive to the particularities of place, history, and power structures, should hence be one of the primary responsibilities of a critical scholarship on the global South (see Said 1989; Mbembe 1992; Omeje 2015). Theory is a key instrument of knowledge production which can translate 'specificities into more general frameworks, so that debates beyond the immediate setting can be opened up' (Duncan & Duncan, 2001, p. 402). However, African and other postcolonial societies in the South have been largely exempt from participating in this theory-producing venture, and frequently remain locked into an 'epistemic location' of marginality (Grosfoguel 2007). Political geography is especially complicit in sustaining this valorisation of Western-centric knowledges and perspectives to the detriment of the

formerly colonised areas of the world, which has illustrated that the '[discipline] is constructed in particular places' (Myers 2014, 125). First, there are more profound points of reflection to be considered on the enduring dominance of canonical texts and theories that are rooted in the languages and privileged thought processes of a narrow Western modernity (Mignolo 2007; Mignolo 2011; Mbembe 2017; Thiong'o 1986). Second, even within these prevailing and fortified academic power configurations, and especially the field of political geography, experiences from African societies are afforded limited importance for the advancement of conceptual frameworks and knowledges relevant to the rest of the world. It seems only right then, when Mbembe laments the fact that much scholarship has not been concerned with comprehending 'the political' in Africa to inform theorisation, but instead with manipulating its social realities on the ground (Mbembe 2001, 7).

However, political geography is well-positioned to respond to this important critique and, in Chakrabarty's memorable words, 'provincialise' (Chakrabarty 2000) Euro-American experiences. This requires a readiness to accept and act on the genuine multi-directionality of conceptualisations of the social world, in ways that allow for the emergence of theory based on practices, lived realities and empirical findings *in* and *of* the global South (Comaroff and Comaroff 2015). With reference to the continent, it therefore becomes a question of how 'to write the world from Africa or to write Africa into the world' (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004, 348) and, by extension, into academic disciplinary knowledge. This doctoral thesis offers a limited but hopefully prudent contribution to this larger project of provincialising political geography in its present epistemic configuration and allow for an examination of the global issues surrounding power, space and (im)mobilities taking Southern environments as a point of departure. As Tariq Jazeel has repeatedly argued, while

the relevance of postcolonial and Southern experiences for the North is habitually questioned or dismissed, it is almost taken for granted that studies conducted in metropolitan locations have universal import (Powell et al. 2017, 97; Jazeel 2018). While this study does not purport to subvert institutionally colonial and structurally racist power relations in the political economy of academic knowledge production and research, that have gained more concerted attention from critical geographers in recent years (Noxolo 2017; Radcliffe 2017; Naylor et al. 2018; Jazeel 2017), the modest call for acknowledging the importance of non-Western experiences, and in particular those from African societies, for understanding the socio-spatial dynamics elsewhere in the world, remains urgent nonetheless. While this alone is certainly not sufficient to ‘decolonise’ the discipline, which rests on an engrained set of structural and especially economic relations of power, it contributes to ongoing efforts to prevent the further ‘othering’ of Southern spaces and experiences and dismiss their marginal discursive position as suppliers of facts as simple ‘raw material’. While this thesis primarily focuses on humanitarian enforcement in Kenya, I claim that its findings are not limited to this geographical remit alone, but in fact shed light on many broader processes, practices, and modes of governance that have evolved through the capillaries of colonialism and empire across the globe.

Grounded and inductive approaches to theory

Acknowledging these epistemological limitations and lasting power asymmetries, I adopted a grounded approach to theory (Oktay 2012; Charmaz 2014) that worked through inductive processes of interpretation for making sense of the ‘data’. During fieldwork itself, I was not seeking to apply any particular theory, although conceptualisation was an essential element of pre-fieldwork preparations, but was

constantly open to new impulses emerging directly from my daily engagement with informants, their lives, and the social contexts around me. This inductive approach to research has notably shaped the direction of my enquiry and, in spite of its undeniable uncertainty, was ultimately advantageous for navigating and ordering the ‘messiness’ of social encounters and lived experiences. However, this does not preclude the inevitable encroachment of theory during fieldwork, on the contrary, any pretence of the ability to ‘switch off’ theoretical considerations is doubtlessly disingenuous and misleading. In his writing on police ethnography, Fassin notes that “‘the researchers’” minds are not free from implicit theories or questions when they are in the field, but one could go as far as saying that the success of their work can be measured by their capacity to get rid of their old ideas and let new ones emerge’ (Fassin 2017b, 7).

In response, grounded and inductive paths to conceptualisation aim to ‘build levels of abstraction directly from the data’ (Charmaz 2014, 3) as opposed to using preconceived codes and categories that may restrict analysis and conclusion from the start. In this way, the compilation of ideas and information follows first and foremost the rhythms of the place of study, thus encouraging the ‘progressive elaboration of knowledge through the emergence of meanings’ (Fassin 2017, 5; see Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont 2003) and not a formulaic or prefabricated exegesis of them. For instance, after a few months of fieldwork in Kakuma, I decided to widen the scope of my research from an initially narrower focus on community policing to also pay more systematic attention the work of the Kenyan police. This was a conscious decision that arose from a realisation that the policing and order-making practices of different actors in the camp are inseparably connected, and that the modes of action and performances which were prevalent among the police had been adopted by

refugees working in public security as well. Likewise, the focus of each chapter of this thesis has organically emerged from testimonies, interviews, observations and many discussions with interlocutors in the camp setting. Through building the conceptual scaffolding of this study based on such first-hand experiences and hence ‘from the bottom up’, I was able to follow fascinating and often shifting strands of inquiry intuitively without feeling like I was compromising a given theoretical framework.

Encountering ‘the field’: research access and positionality

I am being observed with critical eyes. One of the government officers asks me what I am doing in Kakuma and why I am staying for over a year. Too long? I tried to explain my plan without giving away the details of my research in order to not antagonise him. The officer tells me that ‘many researchers, especially the Whites have damaged the name of Kakuma refugee camp’. I try to calm the situation, laugh almost nervously, turn it into a moment of mutual recognition, and respond, ‘Yes, some are probably not good people’. He drops the subject, seemingly unsatisfied by my answer.⁶¹

Navigating research access

Unease is perhaps one of the most fundamental emotions in ethnographic research. Darling has argued that ‘entering “the field” can be a daunting, demanding and at times bewildering experience, with researchers negotiating a myriad of assumptions, expectations and motivations’ (Darling 2014, 201). This was certainly so on my first visit to the Kakuma office of the Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) in July 2016. The critical eyes belonging to a poker-faced government official watching me from behind his desk were therefore testimony to the unease that my own presence was causing for the authorities themselves. Only two months earlier, the Government of Kenya

⁶¹ Extract from field notes, Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) office, Kakuma, 19.07.2016.

(GoK) had suspended the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) which had been the state's primary agency for refugee management since the passing of the Refugees Act in 2006 (GoK 2006). However, on 6 May 2016, the Ministry of Interior had announced the imminent closure of the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps for obscure reasons of 'national security' and simultaneously suspended the DRA with immediate effect (Brankamp 2016b). While this precipitated enormous uncertainty and ontological insecurity for thousands of encamped refugees in Kenya, it was also a point of stasis for the planning of my own fieldwork until suddenly, several days later, Kenyan authorities clarified that the Kakuma refugee camp would remain open, against all odds. In the midst of this confusion, it was further announced that the DRA would be succeeded by a new government agency, the so-called Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS), which was expected to be more assertive in its approach to managing the country's myriad refugees⁶². In contrast to Jansen's and others' fieldwork ten and more years earlier, the granting of permissions for entering the camps was no longer in the hands of UNHCR (Jansen 2011; Mwangi 2005; Schechter 2004) but had in the meantime been taken over by DRA, one of the functions the defunct agency passed on to RAS. However, in the commotion which the disbandment of DRA caused in 2016, a number of national government offices had filled the gaping bureaucratic 'void' and inserted themselves into the hierarchical chains that researchers were obliged to consult before being allowed to enter the camp.

Having first received a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Nairobi I flew to the county

⁶² This point was raised by several informants from RAS, UNHCR, as well as numerous NGOs in Kakuma during the course of my research.

capital of Turkana, Lodwar, where I was expected to successively visit the offices of the County Commissioner (CC), the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC), and the County Director of Education to obtain their approval before venturing further on to Kakuma in Turkana-West subcounty. As anyone painfully familiar with the inner (un)workings of formal bureaucracies and their 'hierarchical office authority' (Weber 2006, 49) knows, this inevitably involved extended periods of waiting for a multitude of stamps, signatures and ubiquitous photocopies. On my arrival in Kakuma, my first port of call was the local RAS office which was located near Kakuma's airstrip, the camp's main 'portal' (Jansen 2011, 169) to the rest of Kenya and the outside world. As an obtrusive sign at the road leading into the camp made abundantly clear, entering without explicit written permission from the RAS Camp Manager was forbidden. The institutional changes that the DRA/RAS had recently undergone made it more difficult to predict who was or was not to be consulted about my official presence in the camp and it became obvious that, although as ethnographers we would surely like to believe otherwise, 'negotiating access for purposes of research is a game of chance, not of skill' (Buchanan, Boddy, and McCalman 1988, 56). Nevertheless, as Gellner and Hirsch have observed, the negotiation of access for fieldwork is often not a once and for all matter, but rather a process which may continue throughout the entire period of research (Gellner and Hirsch 1999, 5). One irrefutable difficulty that researchers face when first arriving in 'the field' is to navigate its internal politics without sufficient enough knowledge to do so competently. So, although it is well understood that 'the "field" has its own politics, urgencies, necessities' (Jazeel and McFarlane 2010, 111), the ethnographer is usually not privy to those nuanced constellations and professional rivalries in advance. My camp entry permission which was issued by RAS was copied and sent to the Officer

Commanding the Police Station (OCS) and the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC) of Turkana-West who were waiting to give me their own authorisations to begin my research.

As a graduate research attaché at the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA) in Nairobi, I had already previously conducted a three-week pilot study on community policing in the camp in March 2015 (see Brankamp 2016a). At the time, I was able to stay within the compound of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), one of the most long-standing NGOs in the camp that generously supported me with lodging, logistics and the occasional advice. Fortunately, the head of LWF's Kenya-Djibouti operations and their programme manager in Kakuma agreed to host me again for the purpose of my doctoral research. There is always a politics around access, accommodation and physical proximity to those one seeks to study, especially when they are influential organisations. For his own fieldwork in Kakuma, Bram Jansen opted to live in Kakuma guesthouse in town, having come to the personal conclusion that humanitarian compounds were too exclusive spaces that deterred refugee informants from interacting with him in an open and dignified manner (Jansen 2011, 30). In the world of aid and humanitarianism, such compounds are generally governed by a material regime of ID badges, the notorious 'gate pass' that humanitarians and authorised refugees must produce to gain access to this humanitarian inner sanctum, while most others remain locked out. Although I certainly agree with the sentiment of this deliberate choice, my own research was premised on good rapport not only with refugees but especially with agency staff inside those fortified spaces. Moreover, the perhaps selfish prospect of guaranteed running water and generator-powered electricity for at least some hours of the day was a further incentive. I suspected that drawing boundaries between myself and the

institutions that accommodated me would be an arduous undertaking either way. Living in the compound, however, was doubly advantageous since LWF was formally in charge of the community policing project (CPPTs) and I was able to socialise with the relevant agency staff, develop trustful relations, and encounter them on their 'off stage' behaviours. I lived in Kakuma from early July 2016 until September 2017, interspersed with several short-term visits to Nairobi, small breaks outside the country, and a three-week research trip to the Dadaab camps in Garissa county in April 2017.



Figure 10: Turkana pastoralist in front of the LWF compound (source: author).

Building on my pilot study in 2015, I was able to re-establish some previous contacts with agency workers, CPPTs and members of the wider refugee community. This was also facilitated by the fact that I had continued to communicate with some via phone, WhatsApp and Facebook since my last visit. This re-familiarisation and the innumerable conversations, casual discussions and encounters throughout my fieldwork, took place in a variety of public and semi-public locations in the camp and included bars, coffee houses, restaurants, football fields, security offices, shops, and people's private homes. White visitors in Kakuma camp are almost automatically associated with international humanitarian agencies. However, while it is standard for both international and Kenyan humanitarian workers (so-called 'national staff') to move around in their white Land Cruisers, that have become so characteristic of humanitarian aid operations worldwide (Smirl 2015), this was no serious option for me as I was trying to balance my privileged access on the 'inside' of the compound while retaining a conspicuous and perhaps performative distance to the movements and operations of the aid regime in the camp. Not being officially associated with LWF while enjoying their amenities, was one of the strategic compromises that are so common in ethnographic fieldwork. A crucial terrain of this everyday navigation of my own (in)visibility, proximity/distance to power and access to 'the field' were the means of transport which I used. I made a conscious decision to use motorbike taxis (*bodaboda*) and alternatively walk around the zones and blocks of the camp, even when acquaintances in UNHCR and LWF were offering me free rides in their branded vehicles. Though it may indeed seem somewhat trivial, this presence in what were perceived as non-privileged spaces and mobilities was a marker that gradually distinguished me from the mainstay of the humanitarian establishment.



Figure 11: UN plane approaching Kakuma airstrip (source: author).

Positionality and ‘the field’

Ethnographic work always also means an inseparability between the identity of the researcher and the project they pursue. In the accepted absence of ‘neutrality’, critical geographers have questioned their multifaceted engagement with the so-called ‘field’. While for some ‘the field’ may be ‘any natural geographic/social setting or location where a selected research problem is to be studied’ (Schensul and LeCompte 1999, 7), for Massey, “‘the field’ itself is a socio-spatial concept with material, practical effects’ (2003, 84). She reminds us that we ought to pay attention to the crucial nexus between conducting research, the kind of knowledges we produce, and our respective geographical locations (2003, 76). Cindi Katz adds in the same vein that we have a responsibility to examine ourselves reflexively as ‘specifically situated actors engaged

in the political work of representation and the production of knowledge' (Katz 1992, 496; see also Haraway 1988). Even though explicating our specific positionality does not fundamentally alter the power imbalances imbricated in our social environment, indeed some have argued that performed reflexivity constitutes just another example of 'epistemic privilege' (Rose 1997), it is for the (ethnographic) researcher to make those power dynamics visible nonetheless, in particular where racialised postcolonial subjectivities and identities are at work. Sometimes it may not only be essential to recognise our own fallibilities, gaps, and blind-spots but, according to Liisa Malkki, also acknowledge when it is best to leave some stones unturned (Malkki 1995). This exercise of self-restraint in the face of the more extractive tendencies of research was instructive for my own engagement with 'the field'.

My positionality as a white male European researcher was without a doubt decisive for the way I was received, spoken to and engaged with by my informants, acquaintances, friends, and interlocutors throughout my study. Despite unavoidable obstacles in entering their field of study, researchers more often than not enjoy an enormous privilege in their access to people's lives. In Kakuma, I therefore occupied a fragile in-between position through which I was able to spend time in the private homes of refugee informants while UNHCR staff were strictly forbidden from doing so lest they compromise their professional integrity. In turn, however, I was also in possession of an agency-issued 'gate pass' which equipped me with comprehensive access to the humanitarian compounds that most refugees could only ever enter with prior appointments. My evolving unique position as an insider/outsider on virtually all sides, afforded me the necessary flexibility later on in my research to sometimes defy the social 'laws of gravity' and fixities in the camp by having lunch at a refugee's

house, beers with officers at the police canteen in the afternoon, and finally dinner with senior officials from UNHCR.

At the same time, I was aware that all my interactions with informants were inescapably gendered (Sharp 2005; Kobayashi 1994; McDowell 1992). Even though the realm of security and policing was male-dominated and imbued with an enduring military masculinity, various other areas of camp administration had notably higher numbers of women employees. At least one quarter of the refugee community police which I set out to study was made up of women. Male ethnographers in camps have sometimes reported challenges in building trustful relationships with female refugees, especially when social norms and notions of morality were curtailing closer contact between men and women (Jansen 2011; Turner 2010). Upon further reflection, this is perhaps in part due to the non-institutionalised form of interactions many scholars have with women as a result of open-ended ethnographic enquiries that make it more difficult for family, friends, and the broader communities to determine the nature of this interaction. I therefore benefitted from having the institutional frame of both the refugee-staffed community policing programme and Kenya's police that rationalised my intention to also interview women. It became increasingly clearer that the CPPT security offices and Kakuma's police stations provided reasonably 'safe' spaces in the eyes of women informants and their colleagues for the purpose of my interviews and observations. While this did not exactly 'solve' the question of gendered biases and the limitations they had on my field research, it certainly helped to create an amicable and safe atmosphere in which people were comfortable and thus forthcoming.

Meanwhile, the terrain on which virtually all encounters between researchers and the researched unfold is mediated by communication and language in particular. Kakuma is a place of unparalleled diversity with eighteen different nationalities and

countless ethno-linguistic groups represented in the camp. Ethnographic research, which so essentially hinges on the researcher's ability to immerse themselves in the daily lives of interlocutors, faces a fundamental challenge here as it becomes almost impossible to do so for everyone 'on their own terms'. But it is also important to note, as Watson reminds us, that 'learning a language does not provide membership of an authentic community, or automatic understanding of a community's varied experiences, but it may be a step towards shifting the balance of power between researched and researcher and may help generate insights that could otherwise be ignored' (Watson 2004, 59). Having previously lived in both Tanzania and Kenya, where I became fluent in Kiswahili, my entering into 'the field' was most definitely eased as the language served as a *lingua franca* in the camp. Further, my command of colloquial (although Levantine) Arabic, which I had acquired while living in Jordan, proved a surprisingly effective way of connecting with Sudanese Arabic-speakers, in particular from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains despite differences in dialect. In the first three months of my fieldwork in Kenya, I additionally began learning Somali at a local mosque in Nairobi's Eastleigh area and subsequently found a willing teacher in Kakuma with whom to continue my studies. This was perceived by many as proof for my performative tenacity to understand the region and was valued among many refugees and Kenyans equally, as people were able to use their language of choice in our conversations. However, while most of my Kenyan interlocutors welcomed this circumstance, I soon realised that it raised additional suspicions among some police officers for whom I became an unwelcome guest who understood remarks that would otherwise remained unnoticed. This will be explored in more detail in the following section.



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
REFUGEE AFFAIRS SECRETARIAT (RAS)

Website: www.refugees.go.ke
Tel: +254-020-2093675
Fax: +254-020-8047923
When replying please quote:

Refugee Affairs Secretariat
Kakuma Refugee Camp
P. O. Box 57 - 30501
KAKUMA

19TH JULY, 2016

REF: RFG/KAK/ADM/15

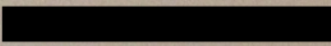
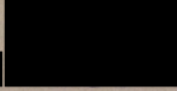
RE: AUTHORIZATION TO VISIT KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

Your request dated 19th JULY, 2016 on the above subject refers

Permission is hereby granted for the below mentioned person from UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UNITED KINGDOM. The purpose of visiting is to carry out research on "*the everyday practices of community peace and protection teams (CPPTS)*" in kakuma refugee camp from **19th JULY, 2016** to **18TH FEBRUARY, 2019**.

1. HANNO BRANKAMP – PP NO. C7XKVFGXY

However, you are required to adhere to the regulations of the Camp during the visit.



FOR CAMP OFFICER-KAKUMA

Copy to: **OCS**
KAKUMA POLICE STATION

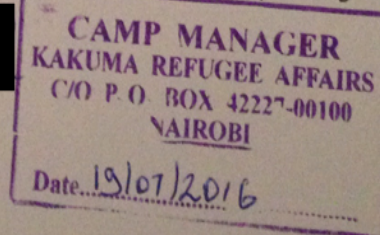


Figure 12: Official permit obtained from the RAS Camp Manager (source: author).

Of Spies and Men: refugees, policing, and ethical research in camps



Figure 13: Police interrogation room, Kakuma police station (source: author).

‘Be careful, my friend. There are powerful people here who can kill both you and me. Or have you dug your grave already?’⁶³

Studying refugees in camps

The camp is a peculiar environment for research. Depending on the context, refugees are often subjected to tight regimes of control by being registered, spatially organised, enumerated, and otherwise provided with food and shelter (Hyndman 2000; Jansen 2013; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007). In turn, they are expected to disclose intimate details about their personal flight histories and vulnerabilities to humanitarian

⁶³ A Somali refugee confided in me about the camp’s criminal networks which included police officers, businesspeople, and humanitarian workers. The quote is taken from one of our conversations that took place in a popular bar in Kakuma town on 01.09.2016.

bureaucrats who often handle their cases from the comfort of air-conditioned offices, located behind the barbed wires and perimeter fences of bunkered aid compounds (Duffield 2012; Smirl 2015). This is done with the implicit recognition that refugees as ‘helpless victims need protection, need someone to speak for them’ (Malkki 1996, 388). Humanitarian organisations readily assume this peculiar role of the intercessor in the understanding that they treat the given testimonies, statements, and recorded experiences of the refugees in a fiduciary capacity. This raises a number of exigent questions, not only with regard to the global politics of representation between North and South (Rajaram 2002; Malkki 1996; Sigona 2014), but especially for the practical process of conducting research in those settings.

Researchers working on or among displaced populations are ‘likely to arouse expectations of help or be seen as a way of effecting change’ (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007, 291; Krause 2017; Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010). Kakuma camp is perhaps one of the most publicly ‘visible’ camps in the world and attracts an almost constant stream of diplomatic and donor missions from economically wealthy countries in the global North, NGO representatives from abroad, and also a deluge of start-up NGOs trying to get a foothold in the auspicious aid industry. While Agier wonders, whether camps are ‘experiments in global segregation, sketches or embryos of cities?’ (Agier 2002, 323), Kakuma has literally become a space of experimentation for potential humanitarian projects, largely owing to its reputation as being safer than the Dadaab camps, ethnically diverse, and an emerging ‘success story’ of economic and social integration into Kenya. The hype surrounding ‘humanitarian innovation’, and what has of late become known under ‘refugee entrepreneurship’ has fashioned Kakuma into a land of opportunity in the neoliberal humanitarian imagination (for critical voices see Brankamp 2018; Scott-Smith 2016; Easton-Calabria and Omata

2018). International (or white) visitors are hence by no means a rare sight in the camp but are usually driven in Land Cruisers to prearranged meetings with refugee leaders, to visit school children, or to inspect another project of their liking. This makes being an independent researcher in this space doubly challenging, as it necessitates a constant obligation to demarcate oneself as ‘different’ from the agencies, while also recognising that this distinction may not be so obvious for most refugees.

Following the examples of other ethnographers (Horst 2006; Jansen 2018; Turner 2010; Malkki 1995; Grayson 2017) and to dispel doubts about my affiliation, I decided to walk in the camp when others would drive, and to socialise in sometimes unsavoury places where no humanitarian worker could otherwise be found. While these everyday acts of demarcation from humanitarian organisations were certainly imperfect and makeshift, they did help initiate conversations with people about my (for them) unorthodox methods, intentions, and often existential questions about my life in the camp. Nonetheless, doing ethnographic research in the Kakuma camp created several methodological conundrums of which I will highlight three. First, the openness with which researchers are received by many refugees has to be read before the background of the asymmetrical relations refugees have with humanitarian organisations. Not seldom would consultants arrive in the camp to do research in the name of NGOs and UNHCR, always implying a search for technical ‘fixes’ to the ‘problems’ of camp-dwellers. This kind of policy-driven research which agencies commission is usually focused on ‘problem-solving’ and hence promises a more immediate improvement in the lives of refugees (Bakewell 2008). In the midst of these high expectations, it becomes demanding for a critical ethnographer to justify a research agenda which seeks to tackle pertinent questions of structural inequalities and power in the camp but does so without the perhaps soothing prospect of a short-

term remedy. This required honest and difficult discussions with refugee informants about the distant and vague possibility of publishing my findings and making (for them) enigmatic academic contributions to debates on encampment, which analyse those injustices that were a daily reality to them. I cannot deny that in the months of critical self-reflection I was time and again struck by a creeping cynicism about the value of this endeavour. Based on ethnographic research in Dadaab, Horst argued that researchers have to come to terms with feelings of 'inappropriate voyeurism when one can do nothing in practical terms to improve people's misery' (Horst 2006, 27). Knowing that my study was likely not going to change refugee policies in Kenya directly, I cherished even more the help of those people who tolerated my questions and shared their insights nonetheless.

Relatedly, research is often an uncomfortably extractive process, especially in postcolonial contexts with power differentials as overt as in refugee camps. Respect and trust are therefore essential for interpersonal relations between the researcher and informants (Krause 2017, 12). At its worst, disingenuous research practices merely place 'refugees as 'objects' of research and [deny] their agency and capacity to respond to the serious issues affecting their communities' (Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010, 236). Critical researchers have responded to this by drawing up more participatory approaches that emphasise reciprocity and the dialogical nature of fair knowledge production (Doná 2007; van der Velde, Williamson, and Ogilvie 2009; Krause 2017; Moran, Mohamed, and Lovel 2011). In fact, UNHCR itself promotes this notion of participation in its operations (UNHCR 2006). However, fostering this participation and co-production of knowledge is often easier said than done. During UNHCR's annual participatory assessment in Kakuma, which I was allowed to join as an observer, a humanitarian officer admitted to already 'more or less know what

refugees will say'⁶⁴ and was hence only moderately interested in the actual outcome. While I did not employ refugee researchers or research assistants, mainly due to the sensitivity of my study focus and my reluctance to expose individuals to more risk, my everyday research routine ended up being inherently collaborative and dialogical. Even though it was difficult to offer a final 'outcome' as feedback for my informants, I engaged in in-depth discussions with a number of them towards the end of my stint in which I explained preliminary thoughts and how I would 'process' the information I had gathered.

Lastly, the process of information gathering itself in refugee camps can trigger anxieties among refugees, especially when the researcher lacks an identifiable place in the humanitarian system. Several scholars have discussed the role of rumours, conspiracies and mythico-histories in the social life of encamped refugees (Turner 2004; Turner 2010; Malkki 1995; Jansen 2018). Camps have therefore become fertile breeding grounds for the proliferation of suspicions towards strangers, newcomers, and powerful institutions involved in refugee management. Hence, researchers must take into account personal histories of displacement which frequently involve escape from secret police, intelligence, torture facilities, prisons, or armed militias. The camp thus becomes an incubator of apprehensions from the past and present, a social space stratified with multiple layers of suspicion. While host governments may sometimes fear refugees as potential terrorists or agitators, the refugees themselves often harbour fear of reprisals from those same authorities and their own governments back home. During fieldwork, I felt apprehensive about the perceptions people could develop of me and perhaps fabricate their own theories about the 'true' nature of my research. While attending a security awareness meeting in the camp, an NGO worker warned

⁶⁴ Kakuma, 22.02.2017.

refugee attendees emphatically about the lurking of ‘suspicious characters’, namely those asking many questions, taking photographs, walking on foot through the camp, or inquiring about people’s personal lives, a definition which struck me as a perfect description of my own fieldwork activities⁶⁵.

Studying the police and policing

In July 2016, I met with a businessman in a Somali-owned restaurant in Turkana’s capital Lodwar. He had written his Masters’ dissertation at the University of Nairobi (UoN) on the topic of conflict in the camp, and therefore our conversation naturally veered towards matters of security and policing. After hearing about my aim to study policing in the camp, he suddenly exclaimed with a subtle sense of pity, ‘Oh, that’s like juggling a liver, a very slippery matter indeed’. Following fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in and around the camp he would, of course, be proven right. Researching the police and other branches of state security is a notoriously difficult task, even more so in a place that is as securitised and monitored as the refugee camp. Kenya’s continuing ‘war on terror’ in Somalia and the domestic arena (Anderson and McKnight 2015; Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom 2017; Mogire and Mkutu 2011) has had a lasting impact on the sense of safety in the country, no less for the security apparatus. While the number of civilian casualties in the Westgate, Mpeketoni, Garissa and, most recently, Dusit2D attacks have dominated international headlines, Kenyan police have been fighting a slower war along the Kenyan-Somali border, in which scores of uniformed officers have been killed and injured in past years. Kenyan authorities are hence especially apprehensive when it comes to facilitating access to the camps where they suspect terrorist cells and activities.

⁶⁵ Kakuma, 18.08.2016.

Police research more broadly has created a common misconception that there is ‘some sort of legible landscape of located instances of state power which we can know up front and which we can straightforwardly visit and document’ (Coleman 2016, 84). It goes without saying that this is not the case, and it is for the ethnographer to venture into those spaces, terrains, and situations in which these instances may eventually materialise and thus unlock the barriers to researching the police, or what Coleman has called ‘the blue wall’ (Coleman 2016). Studying policing or the police as an institution is inevitably fraught with issues of access, trust, fear, and suspicion (Fassin 2013; Maanen 1978; Young 1991), all of which curiously equally characterise the study of refugees. This can hardly be surprising in a *métier* whose core trades are scrutiny, interrogation and performing state authority. Van Maanen notes that ‘the police regard the disclosure of information about their affairs as potentially a threat to their success, and even their survival’ (Maanen 1978, 319). This stands in sharp contrast to refugees, whose presence in asylum spaces is somewhat premised on the ready provision of personal details. And although a growing number of officers in Kenya and beyond are pursuing higher education, for many the words ‘research’ and ‘study’ continue to have an unpleasant ring that signals ‘investigation’ and the search for culpability (Maanen 1978, *ibid.*). Of course, this puts the researcher in a delicate position, as much of the policing routines involve controversial, legally dubious, or sometimes illegal practices that are not for any outsider to observe (Reiner 2000, 218). This dilemma meant that it was often pertinent for me to choose ‘the duplicity of silence’ (Fassin 2017b, 11) in order to not offend or risk losing access to the world of the police.

Moreover, there seems to be a contradiction between the secretive dimensions of police work and the open display of power and control that lies at its heart. Police

officers in Kakuma, just like police everywhere, shun outside scrutiny, in particular in the sanctum of their station or during the routine of their patrols. Obtaining verbal consent for my research from the station commander (OCS) and his direct senior, the divisional police commander (OCPD), however, was not as challenging a task as I had anticipated. My presence as a researcher in their world was tolerated first out of curiosity and later out of habit. Against all expectations, many officers in the camp were quite generous with their time and would patiently answer my many questions, something that does not happen often to professionals who normally *asks* questions. I was welcomed to spend time in the station, including the interrogation room where I could make my own notes while officers would go about their daily work. As glad as I was about this opportunity then, the visible association with police also created distinct complicities in the eyes of those civilians frequenting the police station (see Hornberger 2017; Norris 1993). For example, on one occasion an officer who was interrogating a suspect left the room and gave me uncomfortable instructions which ignored all protocol: 'I'll be back soon, Hanno. Please continue [the interrogation] without me!'. Indeed, researchers involved with police often find themselves on the verge of blurring their identity as 'part member, part fan, part spy, and part voyeur' (Maanen 1978, 346). Accompanying police officers to roadblocks, on evening patrol, and join them in their free time at the popular police canteen expedited this process. Yet in some instances the crude reality of them representing the sharp end of state power suddenly reasserted itself despite the amicability that governed our day-to-day interactions. Quite to my surprise, during my three-week stint in Dadaab, I was met with even more openness towards my research and was offered daily rides with police vehicles into the camps and a free hand in interviewing officers at will. This incredibly forthcoming attitude, however, could not hide my own complicity and conundrums

as an ethnographer of the police. This was brought forcefully to the fore during after-hours drinks with a senior police officer at a local bar where he tried to reassure me with all sincerity: 'If anyone tries to bother you or steal from you, we'll just shoot him dead. No compromise!'⁶⁶. Further ethical implications of my position will be explored in more detail in the next section (see Research Ethics).

However, as Van Maanen has argued 'it would be foolish to assume that once trust has been established it is maintained without effort or that it never waxes or wanes over time' (Maanen 1978, 342). In fact, most ethnographers of the police are routinely put to critical tests some of which I encountered in Kakuma, too, especially from a middle-aged officer whose colleagues cautiously referred to him as 'one of the old school' as he belonged to a generation of officers recruited under the authoritarian regime of President Daniel arap Moi⁶⁷. On various occasions, he would disrupt my conversations with his fellow officers to make his incomprehension and anger at my presence known. For him, I was simply bad news. In retrospect, the analysis and advice which Malkki offered to one of her students, who tried to navigate perceptions of her presence in 'the field', are highly resonant here:

sometimes, given the way institutions think, the people at the station don't want to have to make a formal, official decision about where you fit in; it's easier for them and productive and enabling for you to keep you in limbo, and keep your role ill defined. Am I being clear? That way they don't have to acknowledge [formally] that there's this weird, out-of-category person hanging about. (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 4)

In the same vein, while Herbert recounted his personal development in the eyes of his interlocutors at the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) from potential spy

⁶⁶ Dadaab, DMO, 08.04.2017.

⁶⁷ Phone call, 17.05.2017.

to becoming an 'okay guy' (Herbert 2001), my fieldwork in Kakuma followed almost the reverse trajectory. My presence among Kakuma's law enforcers had long been indulged as long as nobody felt there was a genuine need to take action, thus making me the equivalent of a bad tooth one chooses to ignore for fear of the dentist. Towards end of May 2017, I sensed that I had overplayed my hand and had become a burden for the local authorities. My perceived omnipresence at the police station and across the refugee camp was re-interpreted as an orchestrated case of foreign espionage. Following the visit of high-ranking police officers from Vigilance House⁶⁸ in Nairobi, during which my access to police officers was curtailed and questioned, I was slowly made a *persona non grata* and expelled multiple times from police premises. As much as this disclosed an emerging rift between different strata of the police, from the local commanders to their Nairobi seniors, it also spoke volumes about the securitisation of refugee encampment and the suspicions which have loomed large in the whole of Kenyan society.

In consequence, my personal relationships to police officers and members of other branches of security in Kakuma became tense. My own naïve decision to burn documents to protect the identities of refugee informants, who filled out anonymised questionnaires that could however still be insightful for a skilled investigator, made matters worse. A Kenyan intelligence officer who I met regularly, thereupon inquired with obviously sly satisfaction about the unusually 'large amounts of rubbish' I had recently burnt⁶⁹, implying that I was under his permanent surveillance. He raised the prospect of me being called to testify at a subcounty security committee that included several high-ranking officials such as the Deputy County Commissioner for Turkana-

⁶⁸ Vigilance House is the headquarters of Kenya's National Police Service (NPS) and the Kenya Police Service (KPS), which is one of its constituent branches. Jogoo House is the headquarters of the Administration Police Service (APS), the second branch of the NPS.

⁶⁹ Kakuma, 20.05.2017.

West (DCC), the subcounty police commander (OCPD), the OCS, and agents of the National Intelligence Service (NIS). In a preceding meeting the DCC had already voiced his unequivocal stance on the matter, telling me ‘it is time for you to wrap up your research!’⁷⁰. Alarmed by this turn of events, and after consulting my supervisor in Oxford, I contacted the German Embassy for guidance and perhaps assistance in resolving the matter. Meanwhile, the police’s strategy to hinder further research was slowly bearing fruit: I was becoming paranoid and suspected informants everywhere, deciding to hide hard drives in various places and with the people who I trusted, and temporarily moved houses into another compound. After the embassy had involved liaison officers from Germany’s Federal Criminal Investigations Department (*Bundeskriminalamt* – BKA) to help liaise with their Kenyan counterparts from the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI) in Nairobi, my anticipated summons to the security committee in Kakuma was narrowly averted. Ironically, as I had just overcome the anxieties of being accused of foreign espionage through the intercession of the BKA, the same officers invited me for a clandestine meeting to the embassy to discuss the possibility of volunteering my ‘raw data’ to them, a request I politely but firmly declined. If we are to believe the wisdom that research on the police and policing is like ‘juggling a liver’ then we also have to accept that ‘there can be no pure type of research role’ (Maanen 1978, 346). My perceptual metamorphosis from a curiosity to ‘spy’ during fieldwork, and from citizens-in-need to become precisely the informer I was accused of being, is testimony to the slipperiness and pitfalls of studying the police as everyday agents of state power.

⁷⁰ Kakuma, 19.07.2017.

Research ethics

Despite (or perhaps because of) the realisation that an ethnography on the police is somewhat ‘dirty’ through its entanglements with oppressive practices (Jauregui 2013; Reiner 2010), there is a need to revisit its ethical implications. The circumstances of my field research in Kakuma, which did not just involve the police but crucially also refugees, give further impetus to this problem. As I have outlined in the preceding sections, trustful interpersonal relationships are indeed an indispensable part of the research process, but simultaneously endow us with responsibility towards respecting confidentiality, the dignity of informants, and even ensuring their personal safety. Consequently, I have either anonymised or pseudonymised most names that appear in this thesis. This follows the prescriptions of the Oxford University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) guidelines but also draws on specific literatures on conducting ‘ethical research’ with asylum-seekers and refugees (RSC 2007; Krause 2017; Block, Riggs, and Haslam 2013).

The most central ethical challenge for this research was the fact that refugees and the police in Kakuma have a complicated, troubled and often openly adversarial relationship which, as a result of my interest in both sides, then produced conflicting responsibilities. An ethnography of the state institution authorised to deploy violence was confronted with the study of those standing at the receiving end of that violence, arguably rendering them ‘apparently incompatible goals’ (Duncan and Duncan 2001, 405), if it were not for their mutual entanglement in the social fabric of the camp. To complicate things further, many of my interlocutors were employed by international agencies, Kenyan NGOs, or the government itself, and were embroiled in the politics of those bureaucracies as well. The triangular constellation between the refugees, the police and humanitarian agencies, although these were by no means homogeneous

categories, made it initially difficult to ‘read’ the social field I was navigating. While Harrell-Bond once remarked to a friend that PhD researchers were ‘like scavengers’ searching for hidden treasures⁷¹, the ethical tightrope I had to constantly walk made me often feel more like the proverbial bull in the china shop. Though the low-ranking police officers I was accompanying were certainly not in privileged positions, the personal risk my research posed to them was disproportionately lower than that faced by refugee informants. Despite an abundance of ‘good practices’, there is no ethical panacea to circumvent the conundrums of real-life research, and therefore decision-making was often situational (see Rodgers 2001) and could perhaps be best described as a form of ‘ethical bricolage’.

Bearing this predicament in mind, I decided to conduct my study successively and started with refugees in the community police and before moving on to Kenyan police later. This was both an ethical and a methodological choice, as it provided me with an opportunity to discuss my research objectives and questions of confidentiality with refugees before being publicly (and literally) seen riding with state power. This convolution of conflicting ethical obligations, perceptions and default complicities has warranted constant critical reflection that has continued into the writing process.

Methods: participant observation, interviews, and writing

Participant observation

Participant observation provides a fruitful alternative to the formal interview settings and catapults researchers instead into the ‘spontaneity of everyday interactions’ (Hay 2005, 195). The fluidity of this method can be both curse and blessing, as there is little

⁷¹ Special thanks to Berna Ataitom.

prior guidance of how to approach a given situation. In turn, it requires a willingness on the part of the researcher to immerse themselves in a creative unpredictability of the moment. A ‘regular’ research day would begin with me walking into the camp at around 8 a.m. or – for longer distances – use a motorbike taxi (*bodaboda*) to meet my informants for an interview or shadowing them during their work shifts. In the first phase of my fieldwork, I focused on the community police (CPPTs) and spent almost every single day in their security offices scattered across the camp.



Figure 14: The author interviewing a CPPT member in Kakuma (source: author).

This gave me the opportunity to listen to cases that refugees brought to their attention and gave a basic indication of the legitimacy they enjoyed at least with some. As I became part of the furniture in the offices, CPPTs started sharing stories about their fraught relationships with the police, as well as about misconduct and tensions in their own organisations. It was crucial to gradually establish myself over time as an independent researcher who was neither affiliated with Kenya’s government nor humanitarian agencies. This afforded me a chance to gain credibility and

trustworthiness in many people's eyes, which qualified me for being entrusted with more intimate details about individual life trajectories. Furthermore, the tedious task of sitting in security offices for hours was not only valuable for comprehending everyday policing and mediation practices but was a kind of test to demonstrate my determination to take their work seriously, something they said not many had done before. Signalling a genuine interest in their work set me apart from humanitarian workers and police officers who, many CPPTs felt, regularly dismissed their work and treated them as disposable labourers.

In the second phase, I began focusing more on Kenyan police and other state actors involved in humanitarian enforcement. While my almost continuous presence in Kakuma in the preceding months had established me as a kind of 'social fixture' and at first 'just another white person interested in refugees' in the eyes of the police, this soon shifted when my interest in police work became more apparent. As time progressed, I was later able to switch more effortlessly between 'deep hanging out' with Kenyan police officers, CPPTs, members of the general camp population, and humanitarian staff without jeopardising my position towards either. While one might rightly expect the presence of an ethnographer to alter the atmosphere and conducts in the scenes they observe, it has been argued that most often people ultimately 'fall sway to the behavioral and cognitive patterns of their social world' (Herbert 2001, 309). The holistic description of my research that I had given to my informants and acquaintances in an attempt to thwart any charges of malevolence or secrecy was indeed appreciated and well received by the vast majority of interlocutors.

In-depth semi-structured interviews

While observations generate ‘data’ from situations and lived experiences, interviews provide a specific setting in which to probe into particular issues with more precision (McDowell 2010). However, interviews are arguably too ubiquitous in many social interactions today (Hoggart, Lees, and Davies 2002, 204), and they have therefore taken on a life ‘of their own’ that makes them oddly familiar and mysterious at the same time. In refugee camps and contexts, interviews have an additional meaning: they are one of the means through which humanitarian organisations like UNHCR and Kenya’s refugee agency RAS discipline refugees and assess their ‘eligibility’ for refugee status and resettlement to third countries in the global North (Jansen 2008; Ikanda 2018). In the camp, interviews are not ‘just’ technical tools, but instruments of power which structure the social system of the camp itself. This existing meaning of interviews must be read as subtext when conducting any research in the camp, as the research questions are not seldom misconstrued as covertly establishing ‘need’ or ‘insecurity’ (see Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007).

During fieldwork, I was conscious of these connotations and had to reflect on how they might affect responses I received. Familiarity with respondents and having an established relationship could mediate these concerns in many cases, as they were aware of my role as a researcher placed somewhat outside of, and sometimes at odds with, humanitarian power. During the fifteen months of my fieldwork, I conducted 110 recorded and semi-structured interviews which lasted between half an hour and three and a half hours. Before each interview, I comprehensively explained issues of confidentiality and the interviewee’s right to end participation at any given moment, after which I obtained verbal consent. Semi-structured interviews were organised around ‘ordered by flexible questioning’ (Hay 2005, 88) that allowed for inductive

interactions that are sensitive to the interviewees' own narratives and voices. Interviews with the community police focused on their professional lives in enforcing order in the camp, and sometimes on previous careers which may have affected their choice of joining the community police, such as past careers in the military, police, or militias in their countries of origin. Interviews with police officers were much rarer. In Kakuma, I only interviewed the divisional police chief (OCPD) and otherwise relied exclusively on participant observation and informal conversations. During the three weeks of my fieldwork in Dadaab, however, the opposite was true and I was granted unparalleled research access by the subcounty police commander.

Surveys

While the bulk of my research in Kakuma was qualitative, I nonetheless decided to conduct a survey among the CPPTs to get an overview of their demographics and internal composition. The survey was conducted among 276 of the 330 CPPTs in the service of LWF's Security Department. During the survey it became evident that the actual number of CPPTs was most likely lower than declared by LWF, and probably much closer to 300. This meant that I had gathered information on roughly 92% of all CPPTs in the camp, including baseline information about age, arrival year in the camp, self-identified mother tongue, gender, religion, nationality, education level, length of employment as a CPPT, and previous security jobs held in their countries of origin. Further, the survey asked questions about their relationship with the police, supervisors, and the neighbouring Turkana villagers. Doing quantitative research in contexts like the camp can be problematic and highly unreliable, even if meticulously planned. There is no better illustration for this than the written answer of Benoît, a Congolese CPPT who had previously participated in a test run for my survey. During

the actual survey, he dutifully handed his filled-out questionnaire back to me, only finding me in surprise at reading 'Burundian' instead of 'Congolese' on his sheet. I was bewildered and asked him what to make of it. Benoît's response was emblematic of the problematic nature of quantitative studies in the camp, as he reassured me that he did not want to 'mess with my data' since he had already done the test run and was afraid to be over-represented in the results. As a solution, he had filled out the questionnaire as if he 'was somebody else' but later apologised that he did not know he was supposed to fill it out as his 'real self'⁷². And while this caused inconsistencies in the overall information I had gathered, it was an extraordinarily instructive lesson about the presumed reliability of survey 'data' and the centrality of self-representation and cautious identity construction for residents in the camp.

Focus group discussions

During the three-week fieldwork in the Dadaab camps between 03.-23. April 2017, my access to the camps was more restricted than in Kakuma, due to tighter security regulations. It was therefore not as easy to move around inside or between the camps on my own, nor meet refugees in their homes and blocks unobserved by agencies. In some sense, this undermined the successful ethnographic methods that I had grown accustomed to in Kakuma. In order to counterbalance this security restriction, I used focus group discussions as a way of establishing contact with refugee interlocutors in the camp. But the hierarchical organisation of the operation and my own limitations made it necessary for the Kenyan Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) to organise those meetings with the refugee-based community police in different locations of the camp. Although this was far from optimal in terms of confidentiality and the government's

⁷² Kakuma, 10.10.2016.

influence on the information and testimonies I would receive, I had little choice but to accept this unwelcome circumstance. When I tried to bypass this official channel on one occasion, I used an existing contact to invite a number of CPPTs into a guest house in Dadaab, only to realise after the interviews that none of my interviewees were in fact members of the organisation. In Dadaab, I conducted more than 25 one-on-one interviews and around 10 focus group discussions with the help of interpreters in the Hagadera, Dagahaley, Ifo and Ifo II camps. Depending on their fluency, the interpreters translated either from Somali to Kiswahili or English and vice versa.

Analysis and ‘writing up’

The bulk of my research ‘data’ consists of 250 Word-pages of digitised field notes, collated transcripts from the 110 recorded interviews, documents received courtesy of LWF, Kenya’s police, and UNHCR as well as further published material. Based on the inductive and grounded approaches to analysis, I started identifying emerging themes while still on fieldwork, and then started to code my data and structured the thesis outline accordingly. Having completed primary ‘data collection’ in Kakuma has allowed me to think through the rich material in a more structured fashion than it was possible at any given point ‘in the field’. A permanent switching between an inductive reading of ethnographic and interview materials and thereby re-establishing connections with the literature, has helped to give shape to this thesis. Speaking of ‘writing up’ sometimes falsely suggests putting finishing touches to an already fully-formed argument. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, most of my analysis has happen precisely *through* the writing process, when hunches and ideas conjoined with theory and expressive material to form a coherent argument or narrative. Moreover, as Fassin has reminded us, ‘the general tone of the writing can

suggest benevolence or indignation' (Fassin 2017a, 11) and must therefore be treated with utmost care and sensibility by the author. Throughout this thesis, I have tried to do justice to all people who have contributed to this work with their voices, stories, experiences and treasured insights. While immediate change may be improbable and far-flung in a context riddled with violence and uncertainty, I have written this work in the hope that it contributes to a better understanding of the repressive structures which underlie and perpetuate encampment and perform multiple exclusions of refugees from Kenyan society.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of my thesis. Between June 2016 and September 2017, I conducted research in Kenya, the bulk of which I spent ethnographically exploring state and community policing in the Kakuma refugee camp, with intermittent periods for interviews in Nairobi and a three-week exploratory study in the Dadaab camps in April 2017. This forms part of a wider project to 'provincialise' the experiences of the global North in political geography and aims to strengthen knowledges derived from social environments in the global South and Africa in particular (Myers 2014; Powell et al. 2017; Jazeel 2018). Further, the revitalised role that ethnography plays in the subfield has been an encouraging development which this thesis seeks to consolidate. Throughout this methodology chapter, I have tried to engage in a fruitful dialogue with a wealth of existing methodological discussions, while at the same time charting the idiosyncracies of simultaneously studying refugees in humanitarian camps as well as those tasked to enforce order among them. The result is a methodologically highly

uneven terrain on which the researcher is constantly confronted with ethical choices, power asymmetries, and the unyielding pursuit of ‘access’ and ‘encounter’.

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CHAPTER THREE

Camps and the Geographies of Humanitarian Enforcement



Figure 15: Perimeter fence at Dadaab Main Office, Dadaab (source: author 2017).

Introduction

Growing numbers of displaced people today live in designated spaces of protection under the banner of humanitarian aid. In the aftermath of natural disasters, conflicts, and prolonged flight, refugee camps embody immediate remedies to protection needs but also constitute highly ambiguous spaces. Presently, there are estimated to be over one thousand such official humanitarian camps in the world, including sites that are serviced by UNHCR, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and a profusion of IDP camps (Janmyr and Knudsen 2018). Humanitarian encampment

has therefore been an unsettling reality that affects millions of displaced people and, even after many decades, remains an urgent field of social scientific enquiry. Refugee camps have come under sustained scrutiny in terms of the institutional framework of humanitarian governance (Hyndman 2000; Jaji 2012; Bulley 2014; Harrell-Bond 1986; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005; Oesch 2017), the macrological geopolitics of containment (Hyndman and Giles 2016; Hyndman 2011; Agier 2019; Agier and Lecadet 2014), the politics of refugee identities (Turner 2010; Malkki 1995a; Grayson 2017; Ramadan 2009; Horst 2006; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014), and autonomous forms of authority and self-organisation (McConnachie 2014; Costa 2006; Ramadan 2012; Jansen 2016; Sanyal 2011).

In this chapter I argue that the geographies of enforcement in camps, however, have been largely neglected despite their centrality in performing the immobilisation and control that is associated with encampment. In order to address this lacuna, the chapter explores the spatialities, modalities, and practices which render the camp a technology of policing. Yet the geographies of refugee encampment are variegated, ranging from small-scale asylum facilities and holding centres in Europe and North America to the city-sized refugee camps that are dotted across African countries, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and many other parts of the global South (Opondo and Rinelli 2015; Agier 2011; Peteet 2005; Hyndman and Giles 2016; Loescher and Milner 2005). However, the advent of the ‘migration crisis’ ushered in a proliferation of comparable institutional camps in Europe’s borderlands (Pallister-Wilkins 2018; Vradis et al. 2018) and meant that distinctions have become progressively blurred.

Camps are not a uniform spatial phenomenon. Here the focus is on authorised camp spaces which are administered by a combination of both state authorities and humanitarian agencies, while yet others are permanently irregular, self-organised and

officially unacknowledged. Informal migrant camps like the infamous ‘Calais Jungle’ leave their occupants susceptible to punitive enforcement measures, police profiling and raids, though they also engender particular forms of political agency and struggle (Brankamp 2016; Agier 2019; Rygiel 2011). Minca contests that they are camps at all and instead conceptualises them as ‘counter-camps’ – formations that do not embody repressive technologies but their negation (Minca 2015a). Counter-camps are cognate to conditions in cities and other urban spaces that represent both sites of uncertainty and ‘illegality’ (Nyaoro 2010; Fassin 2013; Coleman and Kocher 2011; Lindley 2011) as well as of sanctuary where political activism and solidarity supplant logics of aid (Darling 2010; Millner 2011). In contrast, official humanitarian camps promise some degree of certainty about residency rights of refugees, though governments normally restrict freedom of movement to designated sites. Supposedly devoid of politics, these camps are promulgated as humanitarian space – arenas of impartiality and neutrality which enable the protection of civilians and ‘within which the prospect of achieving solutions to displacement is optimised’ (Tennan, Doyle, and Mazou 2010, 4). High levels of formal planning, bureaucratisation, and authorisation from state institutions mark humanitarian camps as political technologies that are somewhat imposed on their subjects. Refugee camps therefore differ from detention centres not in substance but rather in the degree and severity of confinement (Mountz 2011; Moran, Gill, and Colon 2016), although limited mobility, unemployment, and insecurity in camps can contribute to a general condition of carcerality.

While informal camps are often incubators of migrant activism and political actions that openly challenge authorities, humanitarian camps are legally sanctioned spaces imbued with the officialdom of the state and aid agencies alike. For example, while the police in France are at the forefront of *demolishing* makeshift refugee shelters

in Calais that are often deemed illegal squats (Ibrahim and Howarth 2018), the police in Kenya are integral to *upholding* humanitarian camps and reinforcing their physical existence (Brankamp 2019). In this juxtaposition, the police erase camp infrastructure and denounce unauthorised acts of solidarity in the first instance, while contributing to the entrenchment of encampment under supervision in the second. Humanitarian enforcement is hence not *per se* premised on the criminalisation of asylum and denial of the 'right to the camp' (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska 2017) as in informal squats or urban camps but is indicative of institutional complicities between the humanitarian morality of protection, state power, and violence.

My aim in this chapter is twofold. First, I want to draw attention to the refugee camp as a space which embodies not only an emergency response to but is entangled with forms of violence as a corollary of humanitarian intervention. Even though this nexus has been discussed with reference to borders (Walters 2011), war zones (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010a; Weizman 2011), immigration bureaucracies (Ticktin 2006) and urban spaces (Reid-Henry and Sending 2014), refugee camps are paradigmatic spatial expressions of the moral humanitarian enterprise. This focus on camps supplements preceding studies that have sketched the ambiguity of employing humanitarian logics to justify and accompany military action with the ways in which humanitarian camps are themselves contingent on state power and systems of policing. Second, existing camp studies have frequently distinguished between the 'forces that aim to maintain control *over* human life and the forces *of* human life' (Katz, Martin, and Minca 2018, 3) and thereby omitted that the political technology of the camp itself is an aggregate space in which street-level enforcers of state power express agency through everyday practices, even when enacting larger policies of exclusion and containment. Bringing into conversation nuanced geographical readings of the fragmented sovereignties in

camps (Ramadan 2012; Feldman 2015) with work on the ethnography of the state (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014a; Mountz 2010), this chapter argues that more attention needs to be focused on the inner workings of the political technology of the camp by disaggregating it into spatial, governmental, and discursive practices which are actually responsible for producing repressive *camp effects*.

In what follows, I begin by outlining the major areas of scholarship which are relevant to this study, starting with humanitarian geographies and the paradoxes that inhere in humanitarianism and its ambiguous relationship with violence. In the following section, I illustrate that borders, urban areas (including informal squats and camps), and detention facilities are among key sites in which migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers are treated as criminalised subjects of security and policing, and live under near permanent threat of eviction, removal, or arrest. This sharpens the contrast with official humanitarian camps which mark ostensible zones of protection in which the forces of state power nonetheless enable rather than impede the flow of aid. Then, I proceed to conceptual debates on the geographies of the camp in which I intervene with the contention that the state as an amalgam of street-level bureaucrats, agents, and enforcers has not received sufficient scrutiny in present-day camps. Drawing on the work of Abrams (Abrams 1988), I distinguish between the *camp idea* on the one hand and *camp practices* on the other, which could be a productive lens through which to analytically disaggregate the camp as a political technology without risking reification. In the last three sections, I discuss how spatial, governmental, and discursive practices are the pillars of humanitarian enforcement and the production of the camp as a constantly policed space.

Humanitarian geographies

The humanitarian predicament and refugees

Humanitarianism is predicated on moral logics for providing aid to poor, destitute, and otherwise precarious populations in the name of a common humanity (Feldman and Ticktin 2010). Fassin notes that humanitarianism constitutes both a Foucaultian 'biopolitics', because it manages the health, welfare and the biological lives of people in protective spaces, but also a 'politics of life' as it attaches specific value to those existences it deems worth saving (Fassin 2007, 500; Fassin 2011; Foucault 2007a). This section examines the humanitarian predicament which spans the responsibility to intervene on the one hand and utilitarian decisions to prioritise how and on whose behalf intervention should take place on the other. Historically, humanitarianism has carried this paradox as both an ideology and a moral practice which underpinned not only the earliest war relief efforts and anti-slavery abolitionism in Europe and North America, but also supported the colonial 'civilising mission' (Lester 2002; Barnett 2011; Reid-Henry 2014; Skinner and Lester 2012).

In the contemporary era, attempts to alleviate adverse effects of war, disaster, and poverty have been progressively institutionalised, which over time has fostered the emergence of 'humanitarian governance' subsuming the rationalities, procedures, and rules which guide interventions of compassion and care (Barnett 2013; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Fassin 2011a; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; Rieff 2003). Actors ranging from intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, private donors, faith-based institutions, corporations to nation-states can be involved in the humanitarian enterprise. Underwriting humanitarian governance are flawed spatial assumptions about the possible production of 'humanitarian space' as distinct from political space on the one hand and the limitation of humanitarian logics to spaces

of conflict and emergency on the other (Kleinfeld 2007, 169). Although scholars have deconstructed the notion that humanitarian spaces are devoid of politics (Warner 1999; Slim 2003; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Schimmel 2006), it continues to wield considerable influence over the rhetoric and behaviours of aid agencies and states as an instrumental fiction and moral technology. This is propelled by a conviction that humanitarianism governs for the benefit of the most vulnerable in society and affords them spatial protection. It can thus be understood as ‘an end in itself and intrinsically self justifying’ (Calhoun 2008, 95), even though the rapid growth of the humanitarian industry and donor landscape have reinforced humanitarianism’s place firmly *within* the existing political structures and the capitalist economy. Human geographers have illustrated the impact of neoliberal modes of thinking in promoting humanitarianism as a marketable consumerist practice catering usually to middle-class, white Northern audiences (Daley 2013; Mitchell 2016; Mostafanezhad 2014; Hyndman 2009).

Yet while the global geographies of humanitarianism indicate an expansion of compassion and care beyond the immediate realm of the family, community and nation, they simultaneously expose and reinforce the power differentials inscribed in the relationships between providers of aid and its recipients. This typically (though imperfectly) maps onto the postcolonial inequities between the metropolitan centres in the global North and their imagined borderlands in which the ‘characteristics of brutality, excess and breakdown predominate’ (Duffield 2001, 309). These power relations are abound with racialised and colonial imaginaries that decontextualise and essentialise affected populations in the South as simply ‘dysfunctional, childlike and dependent’ subjects (Balaji 2011). At the heart of these unequal power geometries of humanitarian governance is the tension ‘between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance’ (Fassin 2011a, 3; see Chimni 2000, 244). Ironically, it is

precisely the promulgation of the high moral principles of boundless compassion and care which form the basis of how humanitarianism exerts power *over* people, easily slipping into a paternalism towards individuals, societies and states at the receiving end of this relation (Barnett 2017). As this mimics the colonial ethics of governing 'dependent' subjects, Hyndman offers a critical appraisal of humanitarianism as a resuscitated 'colonialism of compassion' (Hyndman 2000). The moral imperative of humanitarian actions in their aspiration to protect the indigent and unfortunate is automatically wedded to the deepening of asymmetries of power in its wake. Barnett therefore concludes that 'any act of intervention, no matter how well intended, is also an act of control' (Barnett 2011, 12).

This analysis has had particular resonance in debates about the governance of refugees and displacement (Agier 2011; Hyndman 2000; Inhetveen 2010; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005; Betts 2010). Malkki famously characterised humanitarian assistance as a system of 'care and control' that finds its most visible articulation in the refugee camp as a 'a standardized, generalizable technology of power in the management of mass displacement' (Malkki 1995, 498). For Malkki, encampment is 'a vital device of power' which is aimed at 'the spatial concentration and ordering of people' (Malkki 1995, *ibid.*), something I will return to below when discussing the geographies of the camp. In this context, Hyndman confirms that humanitarianism is a 'well-funded and politicized process of balancing the needs of refugees and other displaced persons against the interest of states' (Hyndman 2000, 3). Encampment as a humanitarian technology is the material expression of the exclusion of the displaced and uprooted from nation-states and is thus seen as an insurance for the preservation of the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992). One consequence of such policies that seek to govern suffering at a distance has hence been the prioritisation of prolonged

refugee aid operations in the global South over transformative political solutions or increased quotas and asylum capacities in countries of the global North. The number of official humanitarian camps has seen a sharp surge in the past decades (see Agier and Lecadet 2014). Under the catchphrase ‘migration management’, the movements of displaced populations globally were increasingly problematised and the right to asylum was concomitantly diluted with the rise of containment as a humanitarian policy (Chimni 2003; Kibreab 2007; Jaji 2012; McConnachie 2016; Stevens 2006; Duffield 2008; Hyndman and Giles 2016). Another effect of these politics of mobility has been the classification of populations according to a moral and spatial hierarchy, in which people remaining in protracted (and often distant) exile are considered more acceptable and ‘worthy’ of assistance than those who traverse from the ‘borderlands’ to the metropolitan North on their own volition (Hyndman and Giles 2011). Chimni warned that it is through the extended length of encampment that humanitarianism itself, among other things, contributes to ‘the erosion of the fundamental principles of refugee protection’ (Chimni 2000, 244). The subtext of this analysis is that mobility management produces particular forms of harm and violence which will be explored in the next section.

Humanitarian violence

Debates about the geographies of refugee containment have demonstrated the innate political ambiguity of the humanitarian project through its routinised subservience to the interests of nation-states. This is particularly noteworthy since humanitarianism is conventionally understood to adhere to principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence (Hammond 2015). Ambiguity also persists in the relationship between humanitarianism and violence which goes beyond ameliorating people’s lives in the

aftermath of conflicts and disasters and rather points towards the violent implications of the humanitarian enterprise itself. One of the most important codification of that relationship are the Geneva Conventions⁷³ which formed the early building blocks of international humanitarian law (Crawford and Pert 2015; ICRC 2012; Kleinfeld 2007). A central tenet of the conventions was to regulate the application of violent force during conflict and war which had largely been unrestrained fields of human interaction. Slim notes that the humanitarian enterprise has hence always *legitimated* and *mitigated* violence at the same time through codes of moderation for the warring factions (Slim 2001). It has hereby focused primarily on the violent *means* used during war and the need to establish rulebooks in order to define their limits. At the same time, the provision of humanitarian aid on active battlefields and in war zones was tolerated as long as it was nominally ‘unarmed, impartial, neutral and independent’ (Slim 2001, 327). Again, the myth of the non-political nature of humanitarian action added to growing disillusionment about its inefficacy, as De Waal contends that the failure of relief efforts to prevent the continuation of cruelties, and the position of aid workers as powerless bystanders, represents the actual ‘tragedy’ of humanitarianism (De Waal 2010).

This sentiment seemed to change with the end of the Cold War. Unshackled from the geopolitical arithmetic of opposing power blocs, humanitarianism assumed more assertive forms and practices of international protection. Especially ‘Western’⁷⁴ governments paradoxically began to draw on invocations of humanitarian protection and prevention of harm vis-à-vis ‘vulnerable’ populations to justify foreign military

⁷³ The Geneva Conventions are a compendium of four treaties which became foundational for the standards of International Law regulating humanitarian action during war. The most recent of the conventions – and to which most scholarship refers – are the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, (for full text see ICRC 2012).

⁷⁴ This is shorthand for a cultural, political, and historical construct that usually denotes Euro-American societies with liberal democratic systems and often former colonial powers.

campaigns under the guise of an emerging ‘responsibility to protect’ (Wood 1996; Bellamy 2010; Weiss 2004). Rather than restricting itself to regulating the means by which violence was waged and trying to create safe spaces in the midst of war, this new humanitarianism promoted intervention onto the territories of sovereign nation-states and elevated the protection of human life as the *end* of military action. Kleinfeld explains that while receiving assistance has long been seen as a passive human right, it was gradually construed as equally implying an active moral obligation of political actors to demand and even force spatial access to areas and populations of concern (Kleinfeld 2007, 173). Discussions on these aggressive forms of humanitarianism are important because they illustrate the rupture with reactive paradigms and the advent of a more proactive projection of humanitarian power globally. Much-cited examples are the neo-imperialist ambitions of the United States and many European countries that underwrote militarised humanitarian interventions from Somalia to Kosovo and Libya (Ayoob 2002; Rutherford 2008; Orford 1999; Bush, Martiniello, and Mercer 2011; Wai 2014).

Building on this literature, Fassin and Pandolfi assert that this contemporary orientation of humanitarianism ‘is new in that the politics of military intervention are now played out in the name of humanitarian morality’ (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010b, 12). Their main concern is with the instrumental invocation of ‘emergencies’ in facilitating a ‘reciprocal and asymmetrical dependency’ of humanitarian actors and military powers (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010b, 15). In their view, it is the act of declaring states of exception and emergency which is key for diminishing contested political questions to mere operational choices that appear to lack viable alternatives. This can include the creation of spatial formations such as safe corridors, protection zones and camps or the temporal extension of the emergency itself, thus effectively

averting a return to 'normal order' in the name of humanitarian morality (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010b; Calhoun 2008). Calhoun insists further that 'the emergency' draws more attention to the event of disaster or crisis rather than its structural causes rooted in politics (Calhoun 2010, 30). Eyal Weizman brings these analyses to their logical conclusion by arguing that the confluence of military and humanitarian rationalities marks the contemporary moment of moral governance over the poor and destitute as the 'humanitarian present' (Weizman 2011). Weizman reverts to probing the means of warfare in addition to their justification and contends that through the deliberate minimisation and calculation of anticipated death and destruction, humanitarianism supports an economy of violence which treats killing as a 'tolerated sin' (Weizman 2011, 8). However, it is clear that this is not a story of regression from a principled humanitarianism of the past to a more recent yet corrupted manifestation, but rather points to a deeper ideological predisposition towards compromise and toleration of violence. This finds a distinctly geographical expression in the production of spaces which are shot through with collusions between military, humanitarian, and political power (Weizman 2011).

By furthering this argument, political geographers have since tried to map out the wider 'geographies of humanitarian violence' and interrogated their institutional, moral, and practical complicities across different contexts, spaces, and temporalities (Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015; Newhouse 2015). These contributions have advanced much needed debates about the multifaceted articulations of violence that humanitarianism exerts, tolerates and perpetuates, including symbolic and structural forms of violence which are often neglected (Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015, 2233). From this scholarship emerges the understanding that while foreign military interventions have been the main focus of studies on humanitarian violence, perhaps

due to their relative visibility in global politics, comparable effects of connivance and complicity persist in a range of contexts like displacement camps (Newhouse 2015; Branch 2009), counter-insurgencies (Bhungalia 2015), military detention sites (Nisa 2015), urban spheres (Reid-Henry and Sending 2014) and immigration bureaucracies (Ticktin 2006). In this respect, Weizman's notion of the 'humanitarian present' is a useful shorthand for a contemporary politics in which moral technologies and violent practices converge with the aim of effecting moderation of 'the lesser evil'. Morality plays an important role in these dynamics because it is the ideational trigger which 'justifies suspension of the rule of law' (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010b, 12). However, there is need for caution that these spaces become reified and essentialised, ignoring that particular forms of humanitarian violence may even traverse different spaces and re-appear seemingly 'out of context'. With this in mind, I propose in Chapter 4 that refugee encampment has produced entanglements between humanitarian camps and zones under military occupation (see Brankamp 2019).

Security and asylum: borders, urban spaces, and detention

In the last decades, political discourses and state policies have increasingly identified refugees, asylum-seekers, and migration more generally as a 'security threat'. At least since the end of the Cold War, human mobility has been interpreted as intrinsically suspicious, thus subjecting mobile populations to expanding regimes of surveillance and policing (Aas and Bosworth 2013; Weber and Bowling 2004; Weber 2013; Bigo 2002; Fassin 2011b). In particular, migrant movements to European countries and North America have been framed in unequivocal terms as a 'problem of state policy, national cohesion, [and] racial consciousness' (Silverstein 2005, 364; Fassin 2001; Tesfahuney 1998). The 'war on terror' further reinforced racialised anxieties about

immigration and connected it to concerns about the territorial penetrability of 'Western' nation-states and their incapacity to secure borders (Huysmans 2007; Bigo 2002; Ashutosh and Mountz 2012; Ehrkamp 2016). With the increase in migrants crossing the Mediterranean around 2015, and many thousands dying during those journeys, this securitisation of migration reached new heights and culminated in what became widely known as the European refugee 'crisis' (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak 2018; Khiabany 2016). Even though the intensity of movements across land borders, seas and transit points was unparalleled in recent history, they were not entirely novel but rather reflected long-standing postcolonial mobilities and racialised geographies of power (Danewid 2017). Bearing in mind the conspicuous racialisation of the tolerated migrant deaths on perilous transcontinental journeys, scholars have at least for two decades described contemporary regimes of (im)mobility as a 'global Apartheid' which finds its expression in 'militarized border technologies and personnel, interdictions at sea, biometric tracking of the mobile, detention centres, holding facilities, and the criminalization of mobility' (Besteman 2019, 26; see Tesfahuney 1998). This is a trenchant analysis because it recognises that 'geopolicing systems' (Tsfahuney 1998) as characterised through a concomitant racialisation, criminalisation and securitisation of especially migration from South to North which materialises in a multiplicity of segregated sites, corridors and processes in the present. Migration enforcement thus typically spans borders, urban spaces, and detention centres, but also extends increasingly into 'protective' humanitarian spaces and camps which will be addressed in the next section.

Borders are perhaps the most intuitive loci for policing migrants. As spatial symbols of state territoriality, they simultaneously embody imaginaries of compartmentalised nation-states and exclusionary identities while producing real-life

effects (Agnew 2008, 176). The securitisation of migration has heralded the renewed fortification and militarisation of borders, with states in Europe and North America in particular seeking to re-assert their sovereignty and even expand it into new arenas (Jones and Johnson 2016; Léonard 2010; Andersson 2016; Squire 2011). Jones and Johnsen observe that borders are emblematic for the ‘blurring of internal and external logics of the police and military into an all-encompassing logic of perpetual war, surveillance and security’ (Jones and Johnson 2016, 188). However, apart from the re-materialisation of walls, fences and barriers, this has also effected a ‘re-scaling’ of borders (Darling 2016) through the diffusion of bordering processes into local communities and everyday spaces (Coleman and Kocher 2011; Balibar and Williams 2002). Border policing has been further reconfigured through biometrics and digital surveillance techniques that pre-empt and supplement the physical architectures of territorial borders by sorting identities, risks, and (il)legitimate mobilities through algorithmic calculations of threat (Amoore 2006; Bigo 2014; Häkli 2007; Epstein 2007; Duran 2011; Muller 2010). While certainly most of the literature focuses on border security in the global North or its adjacent borderlands, an emerging body of scholarship has elaborated on border enforcement along southern borders, such as in the DR Congo, South Sudan, and Mauritania (Schomerus and de Vries 2014; Frowd 2014; Raeymaekers 2009). While the hardening of physical borders continues and has resulted in the routinisation of border deaths (Carling 2007; Weber and Pickering 2011), border zones themselves have become the targets of aid interventions and have thereby been incorporated into the fraught logic of humanitarianism (Williams 2015; Perkowski 2018). Walters points towards the simultaneity of relief and enforcement, making the coexistence of morally-legitimated aid and security-centred policing the hallmarks of the ‘humanitarian border’. Oxymoronic in nature, this particular space

brings together 'a politics of alienation with a politics of care, and a tactic of abjection and one of reception' (Walters 2011, 145). This Janus-faced nature of borders, as spaces of violent exclusion and minimum compassion, exemplifies the indivisibility of aid and policing in the humanitarian present.

The dispersal of bordering processes to everyday interactions in society has underlined the significance of cities and urban spaces for migration enforcement. As consequence of the re-scaling of borders, policing has been devolved and expanded to a range of state agencies and localities (Coleman and Stuesse 2014; Coleman and Kocher 2011; Fassin 2011b), making cities pivotal anchor points where negotiation of the 'border within' takes place and which can even intensify adverse outcomes for the everyday lives of migrants (Darling 2016; Lebuhn 2013; Balibar and Williams 2002). A recurrent theme in the literature on urban policing are the manifold ways in which the police disproportionately target areas with large numbers of marginalised populations such as refugees, ethnic minorities, and undocumented immigrants with uncertain or without legal status (Fassin 2013; Weber 2013; Herbert 1996; Cashmore and McLaughlin 1991). Over half of the world's refugees and asylum-seekers today live in cities, most of whom are in the global South, prompting UNHCR's to rethink protection policies from focusing on camps towards urban solutions (UNHCR 2009, 2014). However, the interests of host states frequently clash with these promulgations and lead to increased criminalisation of asylum-seekers and refugees in urban spaces such as Nairobi (Nyaoro 2010; Balakian 2016), Johannesburg (Klaaren and Ramji 2001; Vigneswaran 2008), and Cairo (Grabska 2006). The criminalisation of physical presence and the permanent risk of removal by police forces are also characteristic of the growing number of informal migrant camps, squats, and makeshift 'jungles' that have spread rapidly within or at the edges of cities. Whereas authorised camps and

asylum facilities are portrayed by state authorities as the ‘proper’ spaces for refugees (Darling 2016, 3; Kibreab 2007), the informality of more ephemeral constructions in defiance of the state is often perceived as a political transgression. As Sanyal reminds us in her work on Lebanon, ‘squattling not only produces shelter but is also an act of rebellion’ (Sanyal 2011, 877). Reminiscent of, and sometimes congruent with, spaces of the urban poor and informal protest camps are potentially subversive ‘counter-camps’ which disrupt institutional power and attract accordingly harsh enforcement practices (Minca 2015a; Davies and Isakjee 2018). Migration policing in urban spaces, including makeshift settlements, hence often consists of demolitions, erasures and forced decampment, as was epitomised in the Calais ‘Jungle’ in 2016 (Brankamp 2016; Agier et al. 2019) or Mustapha Mahmoud square in Cairo in 2005 (Ramadan and Pascucci 2018). Urban spatial sanitisation is thereby compounded by legislations that are instrumental in excluding refugees, asylum-seekers and other precarious non-citizens while simultaneously blurring of boundaries between immigration violations and criminal offences, between detention and imprisonment (Stumpf 2006; Edwards 2013; Weber 2013).

Detention is enforcement that works through the involuntary confinement of bodies and the imposition of severe spatial regimes of mobility control (Martin and Mitchelson 2009a, 459). Though detention and imprisonment have become *de facto* synonymous in many places, prisons are nominally designed ‘to punish citizens and residents when they have been convicted of crimes’ while detention characterises the carceral state practices of confining ‘people who are not necessarily charged with crimes’ but are held indeterminately as a result of their status (Martin and Mitchelson 2009a, 465). Asylum and immigration detention has risen sharply in recent years and has become one of the most visceral migration enforcement devices to date (Mountz

et al. 2012; Moran, Gill, and Colon 2016), with the United States holding 323,591, Malaysia 86,795 and France 45,937 immigration detainees according to the Global Detention Project (GDP 2018). Since the introduction of higher deportation targets in the early 2000s, the number of detainees in France has reached tens of thousands annually (Fassin 2017, 20). The information on detention in Africa is generally more scarce and out of six countries which the International Detention Coalition surveyed only Zambia provided official estimates of people affected by immigration detention (IDC 2016). Kiama and Likule reported that Kenya has likely detained hundreds, if not thousands, of refugees and asylum-seekers even though numbers were difficult to obtain (Kiama and Likule 2013). In addition to in-country detention, the European Union and Australia have spearheaded the externalisation of asylum processing and have therefore stimulated outsourced detention in North Africa and off-shore prison facilities in a number of Pacific states (Watkins 2017; Mountz 2011; Betts and Milner 2007; Nethery, Rafferty-Brown, and Taylor 2013; Hyndman and Mountz 2008; Andrijasevic 2010). Writing from inside of Australia's prison archipelago, Behrouz Boochani understands this detention regime as a kyriarchal system with intersecting forms of oppression inscribed on the bodies and minds of detainees (Boochani 2018). Temporal indeterminacy connects detention to other forms of contain/confinement, including refugee camps, even though the two should not be readily conflated. The dividing line is rightfully contested and blurry as their shared purpose is to impose 'orders of space and time' (Martin and Mitchelson 2009a, 460) on populations. Yet, even though people's movement is usually limited, monitored and curtailed in most humanitarian camps, they still afford their residents higher degrees of freedoms than detention centres that seek to eliminate at least mobility entirely (McConnachie 2014, 4).

Geographies of the camp

Akin to borders, urban spaces (including the makeshift camps within) and detention centres, humanitarian camps are integral to broader systems of immobilisation and containment on a planetary scale (Hyndman and Giles 2016; McConnachie 2016; Duffield 2001; Agier 2011). However, they are commonly imbued with a notably different morality as ostensibly non-political 'humanitarian spaces' that categorically chastise violence, coercion, and harm. In contrast to conspicuously violent policing of migrants along postcolonial border spaces or in urban settings in the global North, Hyndman and Mountz argue that in the global South, where most institutional aid operations are found, humanitarianism manifests in the waging of 'a geographically more distant and dispersed war against refugees' (Hyndman and Mountz 2006, 86). While states and aid organisations join in extending a helping hand to the displaced, they simultaneously prevent onwards movement to the North and cement the spatial paralysis of the displaced. Forced displacement is thus turned into a 'policing matter' and refugees themselves into subjects of an intrusive surveillance regime (Agier 2011, 17; Tesfahuney 1998; Bigo 2002) that classifies, monitors and inhibits their mobility. In these debates, refugee camps are often discussed as designated spaces of waiting, where occupants are held in a state of 'permanent temporariness' (Bailey et al. 2002) and warehoused (Smith 2004). While it is certainly true that 'mobility management' is a euphemism for the refugee policing which encampment performs globally, it risks reducing humanitarian camps in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia to mere props of containment and buffers in a global mobility economy as seen through the Northern gaze. Rather, camps simultaneously serve as moral humanitarian technologies, sites of containment, but are also embroiled in more local landscapes of policing mobility, citizenship, and belonging.

‘The camp’ has been the key conceptual prism through which geographers in particular have understood the nexus between space, sovereign power and politics of inclusion/exclusion. Political geographers have conceptualised the camp following Agamben as the ‘hidden matrix’ that structures political modernity (Agamben 1998b, 95; Diken and Laustsen 2006; Minca 2006; Edkins 2000). Himself drawing on the work of Schmitt, who had posited that the sovereign is ‘he who decides the exception’ (Schmitt 1985), Agamben conceives of the camp as the ultimate spatial expression of sovereign power, in which the boundaries between ‘normal’ order and its suspension are blurred. Agamben contends that through decisions about the ‘state of exception’, those at the receiving end of sovereign power in the camp are stripped of their status as politically recognised members of society and reduced to the biological essence of ‘bare life’ (Agamben 1998a). This builds on Foucault’s concept of ‘biopolitics’ as the calculative management of the collective health, well-being and welfare of entire populations (Foucault 2007). The camp itself emerges as a totalising space where the biological processes of encamped subjects are constantly monitored, regulated, and adjusted. However, this management of supposedly unqualified and dispensable life in a state of exception does not take place outside the law, but for Agamben the camp constitutes a space which is ‘*at the same time* outside and inside the juridical order’ (Agamben 1998a, 15, emphasis in original). In fact, the camp is at once a stipulated exception to the legal order but thus remains inevitably part of it through an *inclusive exclusion*. Agamben emphasises that this can transport the analysis beyond physical spaces and materialities of camps, because slippages between law and its suspension are symptomatic of the contemporary political order and ultimately makes ‘the camp’ everywhere a possibility (Agamben 2005).

This explains why the camp as a political spatiality and technology has found resonance in as variegated contexts as military and protest camps, detention facilities, transit centres and, not least, refugee encampment (Minca 2015b; Katz, Martin, and Minca 2018; Mountz 2011; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy 2013). As a political technology of state power, some have tried to unearth the colonial genealogy of the camp (Davies and Isakjee 2018; Gilroy 2004; Netz 2010; Mbembe 2003) which is inculcated with racialised visions of order and enforcement. This is illustrated by a plethora of multidisciplinary studies on camps designed for anti-colonial insurgents (Elkins 2005; Branch 2005), forced villagisation (Whittaker 2012), colonial prisoners of war (Netz 2010), or early instances of humanitarian encampment under colonial rule (Sequeira 1939; Piotrowski 2007). However, the diversity of camp scholarship in geography and beyond has challenged Agamben's narrow readings of the camp as a 'total space' (Minca 2015b, 8) with oppressive spatial effects *in* and *of* itself and has instead produced much more nuanced accounts that stress sovereign fragmentation and the constant possibility of camp politics (Ramadan 2012; Sanyal 2014; Martin 2015; Rygiel 2012a). This has followed a growing literature on political sovereignty and agency at the micro-level which theorises sovereignty not as unitary and abstract but rather as everyday and epitomised in 'practices dispersed throughout, and across, societies' (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 3; Mountz 2010; Das and Poole 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Sidaway 2003). Under this premise, refugee camps are also recognised as comprising 'multiple ambiguities and subjectivities' that emerge through overlapping modes of governance (Oesch 2017; Feldman 2015). Refugees are hence political agents in a complex web of institutions and relations which neither conform to formulaic readings of sovereign power nor 'bare life'. Perhaps because of the abundance of studies that documented how camp dwellers enact political agency

(Turner 2016; McConnachie 2014; Sigona 2014; Rygiel 2012), the question of state power and policing has been somewhat side-lined or treated agnostically. In the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Ramadan describes the empirical reality of the camp as a 'void abandoned by the state' (Ramadan 2012, 74; also Davies and Isakjee 2018), something that at least sits uneasy with Agamben's interpretation of it as the spatial form of sovereign power as typified in the concentration camp.

However, state abandonment is not an adequate foil for a landscape of camps that is increasingly versatile. In fact, analyses of refugee encampment have riveted much on images of humanitarian organisations as a 'surrogate state' (Slaughter and Crisp 2009). It is curious for a political technology that is genealogically associated with the thanatopolitical logics of Nazi and colonial concentration camps (Giaccaria and Minca 2011; Netz 2010), that the everyday workings of state power have not been interrogated more thoroughly. Far from wanting to diminish or negate the plurality of social forces that regulate everyday life in humanitarian camps, I wish to refine our understanding of how exclusionary camp effects are actualised in practice. While contestation is inescapable in any camp space, the geometries of power within which political action and resistance take place differ between camps. Although makeshift camps are the material articulation of a political presence, they are not a repressive political technology imposed on occupants, unlike institutional camps with higher degrees of state involvement (Minca 2015a). I would like to make two observations that will be discussed in more detail in the next section: First, the profusion of actors and everyday sovereignties in camps include state authorities, aid bureaucracies, and actors tasked with enforcing order. Second, though refugee camps are undoubtedly heterogeneous spaces, they do not constitute level playing fields with equitable power relations but are characterised by unequal access to resources,

mobility, and political power whereby representatives of the state often wield disproportionate control over the lives of the encamped.

Policing and the inner workings of the camp

Mountz has argued that conceptualisations of migration systems often neglect the realm of everyday decisions that officials and officers regularly make in the name of ‘the state’ (Mountz 2010, 92). Recent scholarship on the ethnography of the state has therefore sought to disaggregate state bureaucracies and view them as heterogeneous entities in which work is performed with differential objectives, changing proficiency and dispersed power (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014a; Blundo and Glasman 2013; Mountz 2010; Chalfin 2010; Herbert 1996; Jauregui 2016). As opposed to idealised Weberian readings of bureaucracies as clockworks with premeditated outcomes and procedures (Weber 2006), a consideration of everyday practices acknowledges the personalised and contingent nature of decision-making inside state institutions at the street-level (Lipsky 1980). While anthropologists in particular have sought to deconstruct reified notions of statehood in favour of a broader spectrum of sovereign forces involved in policing social orders (Buur and Jensen 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Baker 2010; Lund 2006), there have also been recent attempts to salvage ‘the state’ and its institutionalised policing agents from unwitting scholarly oblivion (Cooper-Knock and Owen 2015; Fassin 2017b). This work emphasises that states do not only continue to be important for organising enforcement in society but consists itself of ‘heterogeneous bundles of discourses and practices that do not form a coherent whole governed by a single logic’ (Bierschenk 2017, 104; see Steinberg 2008). This said, overarching state policies are not irrelevant nor without effect, but the cumulative everyday decisions and banal performances of

officers and officials rather determine their outcome in practice. Conventionally, the police are understood as a specialised state agency with security-related functions such as enforcing public order, criminal investigations and regime protection (Reiner 2010). Unlike militaries, which are usually less visible in society, the police represent like few other institutions the everyday and palpable presence of the state (Coleman 2016). ‘Policing’ in contrast encompasses a much wider range of activities and actors related to surveillance and maintaining social order beyond the domain of security (Yarwood 2007, 448; Wood and Shearing 2007; Bayley and Shearing 1996; Reiner 2010). As a governmental process, it chiefly ‘aims to work within a space to control and modify behaviour inside it’ (Yarwood and Paasche 2015, 365).

Refugee camps are hybrid administrative spaces inhabited by a combination of humanitarian, state, and refugee-led institutions (McConnachie 2014; Janmyr and Knudsen 2018). Although there is often an array of informal authorities that co-exist with official governance structures (Costa 2006; McConnachie 2014), humanitarian agencies are disproportionately influential in the administration of refugee welfare, while police authorities and their refugee proxies are officially charged with enforcing order. Formal state institutions and bureaucracies are therefore unavoidable subjects for research that seeks to understand the inner workings of ‘the camp’. Plural policing hence does not preclude the police from being one of the most important reference point for populations in legitimising or restricting order-making (Cooper-Knock and Owen 2015, 357). In short, while refugee camps are undoubtedly home to pluralistic outlets of sovereignty, the police often remain the most sought-after and significant policing authority available for inhabitants. Examining police enforcement in camps necessitates a disaggregation both of their work and the camp itself as ‘a bundle of practices and processes in a field of complex powers’ (Bierschenk and Olivier de

Sardan 2014b, 14–15). This heeds calls for political geographers to move away from essentialised notions of the camp and instead ‘address the [multifaceted] material, social, and political realities of protracted camps’ (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska 2017, 160).

When zooming in from a macrological view on camps as buffers in the global mobility regime, the micro-geographies of camps as political technologies come into visibility with a more granular image of humanitarian enforcement. Considering the geographical prevalence of humanitarian encampment, the recent surge in literature on police institutions in the global South, and especially African societies (Steinberg 2008; Beek et al. 2017; Hornberger 2011; Kyed 2014; Steinberg 2014; Hills 2014) is particularly insightful but also speaks to the banal workings of state power elsewhere. Geographers have so far primarily debated notions of ‘exception’ and the spatiality of camps without taking a more detailed interest in bureaucracies and manifestations of state power in everyday actions. Paraphrasing Abrams’ influential characterisation of the state for this purpose (Abrams 1988; Bierschenk 2017), the political technology of the camp needs analytical disaggregation into a *camp idea* and *camp practices* with the implicit understanding that they naturally constitute each other. The ‘camp idea’ is what has gained currency in political geography and camps studies more generally as producing repression and spatial exclusions of encamped populations. It is this reified concept of the camp that Agambenian and post-Agambenian debates continue to engage with and which, in Abrams words, is ‘the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is’ (Abrams 1988, 82). Thinking about ‘camp practices’ instead disrupts the implicit construct of the camp as *either* a site of political repression and containment *or* as a politicised space of negotiation, resistance and agency. Rather, attending to the inner workings of how spatial, political, and symbolic exclusions are

actually produced opens the possibility of regarding the camp itself as ‘a practice not an apparatus’ (Abrams 1988, 64).

Humanitarian enforcement produces tensions between the moral aspirations of humanitarian space and the everyday encounters of uniformed officers, street-level enforcers, and bureaucrats with displaced populations. In the following section, I introduce three lenses through which to disaggregate the camp idea into its constituent spatial, governmental, and representational practices. First, exploring the policing of camps requires a consideration of physical control over spaces, movements, and the microphysics of power that manifest through circulations, closures, decelerated mobility, and kinetic forms of violence. Second, presuming that the camp is a policing device means that direct control is supplemented by technologies of government that prescribe desired conducts for the encamped populations and enlist them into upholding a particular vision of order. Third, policing is invariably embedded in moral discourses which mirror and entrench existing social hierarchies and legitimate particular institutional policies towards ‘the policed’. In the next section, I will discuss in detail how these spatial, governmental, and imaginative practices underwrite one another and thereby produce complex geographies of humanitarian enforcement in the camp.

Spatial practices

The production of spatial exceptions, ordering disorder and controlling the mobilities of people are among the core functions of the camp as a political technology (Minca 2015b). However, they also take centre stage in the growing geographical scholarship on the policing of social space (Yarwood 2007; Herbert 1996; Fyfe 1991; Coleman 2016; Paasche and Sidaway 2010; Kaufman 2016). Dialogue between these bodies

of literature has been surprisingly limited, even though the geographies of policing provide a naturally useful vantage point through which to revisit the camp and hence explore ‘the ways in which power shapes space’ (Yarwood 2007, 447). Considering the camp itself a way of policing space, Netz argues that if the prevention of motion is the main objective of encampment, material camp infrastructure renders police and military ‘superfluous’ (Netz 2010, 142). Yet camps are not merely spatial automatons designed to contain populations through the violent materiality of fortified fences and barbed wire alone. On the contrary, even detention facilities and prisons, in which spatial confinement is infinitely more severe than in humanitarian camps, rely on the constant labour of guards and official administrators. Hailey notes in this regard that ‘combining field and event, camp is in effect spatial practice’ (Hailey 2009, 3). This means that it is rather through uniformed officers and officials, who usually represent the foot soldiers of containment, that a designated field *becomes* the camp. A people-centred reading of encampment counters the reified notion of the camp as a material formation and instead presents it as an amalgam of spatial practices of policing which are continuously enacted and performed in the everyday.

When we unpack the camp as a political technology it reveals the pluralistic networks of actors involved in spatial ordering and policing, and what Herbert would call the making and marking of space (Herbert 1996, 22). Ramadan already hints at this possibility when he contends that studying refugee camps and their spatialities is ‘to study everyday geopolitics’ (Ramadan 2012, 74; see Hyndman and Giles 2016). Feminist geographers especially have been at the forefront of these discussions and have explored how ‘the sharp end’ of power is animated through bodies and practices (Dixon and Marston 2011, 445; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Massaro and Williams 2013; Marston 2003; Hyndman 2004). This destabilises reifications of the state and

its institutions and demonstrates that state power as manifested in the police is not a taken-for-granted signifier but must always be thought of in terms of the spatial effects it has on the lived experiences of people, including their push-backs and responses of resistance (Massaro and Williams 2013, 567). The spatial practices of humanitarian enforcement firmly situate the technology of the camp in these 'prosaic geographies of stateness' (Painter 2006). As much as materialities and legal exceptionalism frame refugee encampment with a predisposed grammar of control, spatial exclusion and containment only come into force through individuals who enforce and act on them. Herbert therefore argues that it is this 'decentralized, capillary power' of policing that compounds abstract visions and rationales with the contingencies of everyday action and decision-making (Herbert 1996b, 49). Among geographers this has elicited a heightened sensitivity for the 'imbrications of security, governance and territory at the level of the street' (Paasche, Yarwood, and Sidaway 2014, 1559; Proudfoot and McCann 2008). Likewise, criminologists such as Reiner acknowledge that policing itself 'has become embedded in a plethora of environmental, spatial, architectural, and technological modes of achieving and protecting spatial exclusion' (Reiner 2000, 209).

This focus on spatial exclusion and control points to the possible convergences between camp geographies and policing more generally. While policing of informal camps and squats means that the police commands near unlimited control over space and the criminalised dwellers through raids, removals and erasure of infrastructure, humanitarian camps are nominally legal spaces of residency in which criminalisation is nevertheless simulated through the instantiation of special rules, mobility regimes, and exclusions within. Camp policing is organised along a continuum that ranges from the intermittent dismantling of camps as spaces of sometimes defiant political

claims-making and solidarity, to the actualisation and amplification of the repressive camp technology itself through everyday practices of containment, supervision, and disciplinary violence.

Governmentality

In their seminal work on security governance, Wood and Shearing make a distinction between ‘governance through force’, including physical intervention, and ‘governing through enrolment’ (Wood and Shearing 2007, 9) which denotes more Foucaultian understandings of government and policing as conditioning the conducts of people and the self. Most studies on refugee camps have focused on aid organisations as embodiments of liberal humanitarian government (Agier 2011; Hyndman 2000; Inhetveen 2010; Bulley 2014). This is based on the assumption that humanitarianism follows the script of a ‘Western’ liberal order based on free markets, the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the construction of people as self-determined and entrepreneurial individuals (Reid-Henry 2014, 420). Though the purported objective of humanitarian intervention is to alleviate suffering, it also constitutes a concerted attempt at ‘ordering disorder’ (Hyndman 2000, 121). It has been recognised that to that end, UNHCR and other aid agencies marshal governmental technologies which aim to programme the conduct of encamped refugees (Lippert 1999; Bulley 2014; Jaji 2012; Inhetveen 2010). This draws on a Foucault’s notion of governmentality which regards power not simply as the application of coercion and brute violence but rather as guiding, encouraging, and orienting the conduct of others towards particular ends (Foucault 1991). Governmentality ‘includes the institutions, procedures, actions, and reflections that have populations as object’ (Fassin 2011b, 214). Thus, according to Foucault, ‘to govern [...] is to structure the possible field of action of others’

(Foucault 1982, 790).

In the humanitarian arena, governmental logics are used to minimise the use of disciplinary control and instead create a framework that automatically guides and limits the actions and conducts of refugees. Humanitarianism therefore emerges as a managerial form of government that hinges on the use of statistics, calculation, and surveillance (Hyndman 2000). While governmentality typically centres on steering conducts and relations, Elden contends that it is also an inherently spatial concept (Elden 2007). Furthermore, a number of scholars highlight the connection between humanitarian governance and ‘advanced liberal’ (or neoliberal) modes of organising society, because they identify a trend towards the privatisation of responsibilities and advocacy for refugee self-governance through the rhetoric of ‘empowerment’ (Ilcan and Lacey 2011; Lippert 1999; Bulley 2014). In other words, humanitarian actions frequently seek to outsource protection to the refugee communities themselves while championing popular beliefs in human rights and the legitimacy of humanitarianism itself (Ilcan and Rygiel 2015).

At the same time, the camp is also a ‘spatial security technology’ (Bulley 2014) in which idealised ‘refugee communities’ can be instrumentalised for the purpose of order-making and enforcement. Policing itself is often seen as a function of ‘care and control’ (Walker 1994; Stephens 1994) that is designed to regulate social behaviours as well as set and reinforce boundaries of permissibility. One insight from discourses on governmentality is that a ‘variety of authorities govern different sites, in relation to different objectives’ (Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde 2006, 85). While the police and other state security organisations are involved in directly coercive practices, they also crucially hinge on modes of ‘government through community’ (Rose 1996, 336) which include consultative forums, peacebuilding schemes and democratic elections,

but extend the mechanisms of community-based policing. Despite the liberal shell of the humanitarian project (Reid-Henry 2014; Bulley 2014; Lippert 1999), this in turn produces somewhat illiberal technologies of government.

Opitz argues that liberal forms of government are in fact premised on illiberal mobilisations of power and space which at once haunt and corrupt yet ultimately advance them (Opitz 2010, 76). Decentralised camp governance through community policing is a way for governing authorities to conscript refugees into humanitarian enforcement, giving impetus to a dual strategy of ‘subjugation and subjectivation of individuals’ (Fassin 2011b, 214). Discussions about humanitarian enforcement as a technology of government reveal a constant slippage between the responsabilisation of refugees as liberal subjects and the emergence of indirect rule that bears semblance with illiberal, colonial forms of government and subjection (Mamdani 1996). Despite a rhetoric of decentralisation and delegation, colonial governmentality did not forfeit state control but rather deepened its power over the subject populations (Frederiksen 2014, 1280; Scott 1995). By analogy, humanitarian enforcement through means of governmental technologies falls short of the promises of empowerment which often accompany aid operations. I exemplify this in more detail in Chapter 5 by exploring the permanent contestation around the implementation of community policing in the Kakuma camp.

Imagination and representation

Imaginative geographies have just featured marginally in studies on humanitarianism and encampment, despite offering a distinctive lens through which to comprehend spatial power and policing. It is by now widely acknowledged across disciplines that the ways in which space is imagined are socially consequential, be it in sociology

(Wacquant 2007; Wacquant and Slater 2014), anthropology (Appadurai 2008), literary studies (Said 1994; Bhabha 2004) and, not least, geography (Gregory 1995; Gregory 2004; Herbert 2006; Kothari 2006; Bialasiewicz et al. 2007; Massey 2003; Sharp 2009; Jazeel 2012b; Soja 1996). A recurrent concern of this scholarship has been to interrogate connections between spatialities and their representation through cultural mappings, imaginaries, and various regimes of knowledge. In order to do so, Gregory, for example, employs Edward Said's notion of imaginative geographies as 'ideological landscapes whose representations of space are entangled with relations of power' (Gregory 1995, 474; see Said 1994). Imaginings of humanitarian spaces have seldom been objects of thorough scholarly analysis, although camp studies and discourses on refugees are usually rife with imaginations of a common humanity, the self, as well as the 'other'. Hailey has maintained that in addition to their physical, legal, and temporal properties 'camp spaces also lie at the confluence of mental and social space' (Hailey 2009, 3). Agamben's oft-cited inference of 'bare life' illustrates that the spatio-legal framework of the camp has a crucial bearing on the discursive production of the types of social life that are anticipated within. Thus, refugee camps do not 'just' constitute designated spaces for aid delivery but are social constructs that have come to embody certain kinds of destitution and threat which contrast both with the moral project of humanitarianism and the representation of self.

Further, scholars have long been attentive to symbolic relationships between enforcing order and representation of spaces and policed populations. Van Maanen famously invoked everyday discourses in which police officers identify certain types of citizen clients, each of which is associated with a particular role within the broader dramaturgy of police work (Van Maanen 1978). These roles, he argues, are important for the construction of the social world of individual officers and affect the ways they

understand and maintain their professional mandate. Accordingly, Fassin observes that police officers often perceive themselves to be part of a 'moral community' that is imagined as diametrically opposed to the policed populations (Fassin 2013, 211). Scaled up from the street-level, a similar logic is at play in geographies of insecurity and risk that are assembled at the intersection of physical locus, cultural topography, race, and class. Geographical imagination is sometimes an instrument of governance to exclude populations with low social status by tainting them and their living space with what Wacquant has called 'territorial stigma' (Wacquant 2007). This typically includes an imaginative scripting of certain spaces as lawless, filthy or dangerous and their denigration as 'other'. For Wacquant, symbolic productions of spatial exclusion work in conjunction with territorial, economic, and political forms of social control and reinforce marginality. Particular neighbourhoods are thereby branded as 'no-go' or 'anti-police areas' (Herbert 2006) and entire sections of cities (and society) become almost 'mythical spaces of evil or disorder' (Göpfert 2012, 58) that code the urban landscape of policing. While this typically produces locally intelligible cartographies in particular, some have argued that similar processes are at work on a global scale where historically marginalised and racialised postcolonial spaces, borderlands, and frontiers that are imagined as lacking 'proper' governance and in need of intervention and policing (Mitchell 2010; Gregory 2004; Duffield 2007).

Akin to urban spaces of informality and marginality, humanitarian camps are postcolonial spaces that are associated with racialised subjects and invite denigrating depictions as 'disorderly', 'dangerous' and 'dysfunctional' (Crisp 2000; Lischer 2006; see Jazeel 2012a; Sharp 2009). Discussions on the imaginative order of camps have hitherto ranged from mythico-histories and identities (Malkki 1995; Nyers 2006; Ngo and Hansen 2013), political moralities (Turner 2010), to gender imaginaries (Olivius

2014; Turner 1999; Hyndman 1998) and constructions of refugee victimhood more broadly (Rajaram 2002; Malkki 1996; Harrell-Bond 2002). These discourses often mirror colonial regimes of knowledge and power imbalances (Kothari 2006, 239) and fashion refugees into subjects that can justifiably be controlled, disciplined, and cared for. Humanitarian enforcement is therefore inseparably connected to the production of 'popular geographical knowledge' (Crouch 1998) which situates the displaced in cultural fixities, practices and solutions. While disempowering portrayals of refugees as speechless victims and recipients of aid are commonplace, camp administrators, bureaucrats and police officers are also engaged in discourses that ascribe ontological disorder, immorality, and decidedly negative agency to them. In Chapter 4, I unpick these imaginaries of difference at length and thereby probe into the cultural text of refugee encampment which discursively propels the policing of humanitarian order.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored some intersections between humanitarianism, camp geographies, and enforcement practices with the aim of bringing them into dialogue. Beside borders, urban spaces and detention centres, camps are the most salient nodes in the global regime of mobility control and contain sizable portions of the world's displaced. While they serve as buffers that insulate the global North from the influxes of unwanted racialised populations and are thus instrumental in the 'geopolicing' of migration (Teschfahuney 1998), the enforcement regime within camps has remained a neglected area of study. In fact, refugee camps are usually understood as non-political 'humanitarian spaces' whose noble claims of impartiality and neutrality are difficult to square with the realities of policing. In this chapter, I have framed humanitarian enforcement as constitutive of both the processes which create a permanent slippage

between protection, morality, and violence *and* the tangible presence of state power in camp environments.

Political geographers have provided thoughtful conceptual frames for camps as political technologies that range from ‘total space’ and spatialised sovereign power (Minca 2006; Agamben 1998a) to acknowledging more fragmented public authorities and ambiguous subjectivities that blur the distinctions between camp spaces and their outside (Ramadan 2012; Martin 2015; Oesch 2017; Sanyal 2011). Mirroring this schism, studies on humanitarian camps have focused primarily on the role of aid organisations and the autonomous self-organisation of refugees. State power and the police in particular as everyday enforcers have received considerably less attention despite camps being genealogically rooted in the excesses of colonial government and domination (Netz 2010; Gilroy 2004). At the same time, I argue that the reified and implicit *camp idea* as a repressive and exclusionary political technology has been privileged over examining actual *camp practices*. In response, I have sought to unpack the inner workings of the refugee camp with a disaggregation of the geographies of humanitarian enforcement using pertinent methodological lessons from scholarship on ethnography of the state (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014a; Mountz 2010). While geographers have rightfully reiterated that camps are heterogeneous spaces containing a plurality of sovereign actors (Ramadan 2012), there has been insufficient engagement with the fact that the uneven distribution of power among them often favours state authorities over refugees. The task that emerges from the discussions on humanitarian enforcement is therefore to explore the critical convergences of spatial, governmental, and symbolic policing practices that construct and define camps most visibly through ordering their marginalised, precarious, and noncitizen inhabitants. Further, it is through this engagement with humanitarian enforcement that scholars

ought to revisit the camp not as a reified and taken-for-granted space of repression and total domination but rather as a political technology that is ultimately rooted in policing practices and reflects the filigree of state power. Rather than relativising the violence of encampment, this provides an opportunity to de-essentialise the spatiality of the camp while recognising that it is one of the most important arenas for policing displacement, migration, and mobilities. The following three chapters each expand on the spatial, governmental, and imaginative dimensions, respectively, and thereby contribute towards a fuller understanding of policing in the camp.

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CHAPTER FOUR

‘Occupied Enclave’: Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

ABSTRACT:

This article transports discussions on the geographies of occupation to the refugee camp and infers that rethinking militarised policing in camps as a form of occupation brings into sharper relief the everyday violence of humanitarian governance. While most research on the administration of camps has focused on the biopolitical control of humanitarian agencies and NGOs that register, sustain, and manage refugee lives in exile, far less is known about the role of the police and paramilitary. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, this article provides an alternative reading of the militarised spatialities of the camp, in which Kenya’s (post)colonial disposition for state violence has merged indistinguishably with the contemporary securitisation of refugees, and the humanitarian need for unobstructed management of aid operations. This article proposes that these converging trajectories have transformed the refugee camp into a zone under military-style occupation: an ‘occupied enclave’. In this tightly controlled space, Kenyan police act as enforcers of humanitarian violence that is inflicted on a civilian population of refugees with precarious life chances and limited freedom of movement. This is analysed through four domains of occupation – architecture, bureaucracy, physical force and material extraction – that work in conjunction to produce violent spatial effects of immobility, exclusion, and exception. Revisiting the camp through this lens bridges the gap between the literatures on humanitarian governance and military occupation and reiterates the continuing importance of enclave spaces for governing mobile and unwanted populations.

Keywords: refugee camp; policing; militarisation; occupation; enclave; humanitarian violence; Kenya; Kakuma

Introduction

8 December 2016, Kakuma refugee camp, northwestern Kenya: The Officer Commanding the Police Station (OCS) is sitting behind his desk, filling out paperwork and signing commands. In front of him lies a thick red volume entitled ‘Laws of Kenya’. Suddenly he puts his pen and paper aside, turns his gaze towards me, and says,

In our operations, 70% is not by the rule book [tapping with his finger on the volume of Kenyan law], it’s simply by using force. You can’t go by the rules all the time in a place like this, people won’t listen to you, especially the South Sudanese. There are two things: they are violent by nature and they aren’t used to functioning laws. If you just go and tell them gently ‘please come and do this’

they will laugh at you. It's not like in Nairobi or elsewhere. Here, you have to beat and cane them so that they understand what you want. It's not easy.

The officer's comments are reminiscent of how occupying powers tend to portray populations in the territories they control: racially or culturally inferior, unruly, and in need of heavy-handed administration from outside. This hardly surprises anyone familiar with armed enforcement in refugee camps but provides a snapshot of the routinised violence which police forces wage in such ambiguous spaces of 'care and control' (Malkki 1995, 231). 'Violence', Adam Branch writes with reference to displacement camps in northern Uganda, is 'a necessary component of the humanitarian enterprise' (Branch 2009, 495) and is indeed co-constitutive of managing displaced populations. The nonchalance with which Kakuma's police commander recounts his treatment towards refugees is testament to this reality, but also mirrors deeply engrained spatial imaginaries of exclusion that code the camp and Kenya's northern periphery as requiring a kind of 'emergency policing'.

The spatial dimensions of violence have attracted sustained interest among geographers (Gregory and Prad 2006; Springer and Le Billon 2016), with a subset of the literature addressing specifically the geographies of occupation and foreign domination (Handel 2016, 2009; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009; Efrat 2006). Therein, numerous analyses have focused on what Eyal Weizman called the 'architecture of occupation' (Weizman 2012), and especially the political materialities of checkpoints, settlements, and walls (Rijke and Minca 2018; Handel 2014; Loizides 2011; Amir 2013), while others examined the discriminatory bureaucracies underpinning militarised population control (Tawil-Souri 2013; Berda 2017), or multifaceted entanglements of occupation, (im)mobility, and displacement (Baumann 2016; Peteet 2015). Occupations produce topographies of enclosure and

exception that are etched into landscapes in the form of restricted zones, camps, and enclaves as geopolitical *faits accomplis*. Arenas with legal contestations over territorial sovereignty under international law, such as the Western Sahara, Northern Cyprus, Kashmir, or the Palestinian Territories, have featured most saliently in those discussions. Furthermore, some authors have equally labelled humanitarian operations as forms of occupation (Fox 2008; Nunan 2016), and thereby broadened the phenomenon conceptually from state-driven usurpation of territory to exercises of sovereign power by intergovernmental institutions like the UN. Nevertheless, these debates remain too often fixated on the juridical and macropolitical aspects of humanitarian occupations and underplay their violent sociospatial articulations in the everyday. An emerging body of literature foregrounds precisely that, urging ethnographies to critically interrogate the dominant political, legal, and cultural conceptions of occupation to advance contextual understandings of the practices of (militarised) foreign rule (Duschinski & Bhan, 2017; Duschinski, Bhan, Zia, & Mahmood, 2018; Smith, 2011; Visweswaran, 2013). Inspired by this invaluable work, this article transports discussions on the geographies of occupation to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, where a complex web of violent spatialities underwrites the everyday enforcement of humanitarian order. However, rather than occupying populations and territories outside its own borders, the Kenyan state (in liaison with humanitarian agencies) has imposed a spatial system of domination on refugees domestically, rendering camp residents an occupied populace in all but name.

While existing scholarship on humanitarian governance in refugee camps in Africa and the wider postcolonial South has privileged humanitarian organisations as conductors of surveillance and biopolitical technologies (Bulley 2014; Hyndman 2000; Agier 2011; Jaji 2012; Inhetveen 2010), and acknowledged the ability of

refugees to mediate their authority via everyday actions and self-governance (McConnachie 2014; Turner 2010; Ramadan 2012), it has done little to address more directly the role of state police and paramilitaries in managing displacement, with notable exceptions (Maingi and Omeje 2012; Branch 2009). Although aid organisations like the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) inevitably work inside nation-states, their role in delivering public services in camps is sometimes portrayed as akin to a 'surrogate state' itself (Slaughter and Crisp 2009). UNHCR, however, has neither the jurisdiction to enforce laws independently nor physically contain or sanction refugees, but depends on host states and their security forces. Scholars have seen this as evidence for the double-sided nature of humanitarian care whereby the technologies of relief and violence are inseparably enmeshed (Weizman 2011; Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015; Fassin 2011; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010). Therefore, paying closer attention to policing in refugee camps aims at rendering visible what has hitherto remained hidden in plain sight: the underbelly of humanitarian governance.

In line with ongoing efforts to interrogate the spatialities of camps (Ramadan 2012; Minca 2015; Picker and Pasquetti 2015; Agamben 1998) and comprehend the ignominious technologies which govern the lives of refugees, this article considers militarised policing and spatial design in camps as symptomatic of what Weizman has referred to as the 'humanitarian present' (Weizman 2011) and what Branch likewise identified as the 'humanitarianism-violence complex' (Branch 2009). In addition to charting the contemporary nexus between aid regimes and organised violence, these notions have also helped emphasise the distinctive parallels that exist with the geographies of colonial occupation (see Gregory, 2004; Mbembe, 2001). This article hence begins from the premise that present-day violence is tied up with

duplicitous invocations of humanitarianism, human rights, and affirmations of care for the unwanted, displaced, and needy (Weizman 2011; Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015; Fassin 2011). In turn, humanitarian operations themselves are difficult to sustain without the not-so-invisible hand of police and paramilitaries that ironically keep the presumed beneficiaries of aid ‘governable’ (Branch 2009, 478). Despite thought-provoking work that has expounded the institutional complicities, skewed moralities, and calculative rationalities of harm, the quotidian spatial production of humanitarian violence has not yet been researched in sufficient detail. This is despite the fact that waging violence in the name of humanitarianism produces distinct spatial formations such as enclaves (Weizman 2011), camps (Branch 2009) and archipelagos (Agier 2011) whose micro-geographies and militarised modes of policing conspicuously resemble those in occupied territories. Revisiting the refugee camp through the lens of occupation can thus bring into sharper relief its violent sociospatial arrangements and reveal ‘forms of transivity through which sites of occupation [humanitarian or otherwise] index and refer to each other’ (Visweswaran, 2013, p. 7).

Kakuma refugee camp is a formidable site for exploring this. The camp was established in 1992 in Kenya’s north-western Turkana county, a marginal border area⁷⁵ and former colonial frontier, permanently fraught with the limited reach of state institutions and the police (Lind 2017; Waller 2010). With a population of 148,000, it is among the largest camps worldwide and epitomises the longevity and intensity of humanitarian interventions in the region (UNHCR 2018; Jansen 2018). Since colonial times, the Kenyan police has treated the pastoralist north differently from the south as an ‘operational area’ (see Fig. 16), a cordoned-off military zone

⁷⁵ The camp is located 100km from the current South Sudanese border.

where rules of civil policing were permanently suspended (Hogg 1986; Waller 2010). While militarisation and Kenyan state violence at the margins have had a long history under the post-independence regimes, this has recently merged indistinguishably with forceful government policies towards refugee encampment and counter-terrorism (Glück 2017; Mkutu and Wandera 2013; Cannon and Fujibayashi 2018). In light of these trajectories, this article re-considers the violent geographies of Kakuma refugee camp as the organisational matrix of an 'occupied enclave' that impedes the mobilities of refugees through fortified architectures, sharpens boundaries between citizens and noncitizens via permits and curfews, and maximises police control of ostensibly recalcitrant foreign populations through physical force and systematic material extraction.

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork between July 2016 and September 2017 in Kakuma refugee camp and is also informed by shorter research in the Dadaab camps (Garissa county), the Kalobeyei settlement (Turkana county), and Nairobi. Drawing on existing work on police ethnography as a methodology for excavating the impacts and rationalities of state power through everyday observations (Coleman 2016; Steinberg 2008; Fassin 2017), I combined an inductive approach of being immersed in scenes as they unfolded with more explicit questions asked in interviews. I conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with 110 interlocutors, including Kenyan police and paramilitary officers, government officials, humanitarian workers from UNHCR and NGOs, and refugees. My positionality as a white male European researcher was permanently negotiated through my fluency in Swahili which helped gain the trust of some officers, while raising additional suspicions among others. Hence, the study draws on extensive participant observation and countless informal encounters at police stations,

roadblocks, police bases, private homes, and during patrols. I countervailed the paucity of available (and reliable) information on policing in the camp by continuous triangulation with alternative accounts from multiple respondents, media reports, as well as internal documents when available. Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, names of respondents have been altered.

The first section elucidates the notion of the ‘occupied enclave’ and demonstrates how the enclavisation of both occupied and displaced populations share much of their violent spatial configurations. The next section situates the study in the context of Kakuma and offers insights on the making of occupation in the camp. The remaining four sections analyse how policing in the camp plays out in practice with reference to the four most salient domains of the occupation assemblage: architecture, bureaucracy, physical force and material extraction. In a concluding section, I reflect on how the rethinking of policing in the camp as an occupation may contribute to a better understanding of the spatial production of violence in humanitarian spaces and make sense of their close alignment with (post)colonial and military modes of governing undesirable populations.

The refugee camp as an ‘occupied enclave’

Camps are among the most evocative spaces in political geography, with a plethora of studies professing an Agamben-inspired reading of exception as the spatial ‘structure of sovereignty’ (Agamben 1998, 28; Edkins 2000; Minca 2015; Picker and Pasquetti 2015) or complicating it by recognising a profusion of sovereignties in actually existing camps (Martin 2015; Ramadan 2012; Oesch 2017). Thinking of refugee camps as spaces of exception remains politically powerful and conceptually productive, as restrictive camp formations continue their resurgence in the global

North (Minca 2015), while having contained populations in the South for decades (Hyndman and Giles 2016; Agier 2011). Violence seems to be the organisational principle that binds such technologies of containment and aid together, prompting Giorgio Agamben to detect a ‘secret solidarity’ (Agamben 1998, 78) between humanitarians and the destructive forces they claim to confront. Political geographers have shown that violence is constituted *through* space (Springer and Le Billon 2016) and that humanitarian spaces in particular can paradoxically be incubators of violence inflicted structurally, symbolically and viscerally on bodies (Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015, 2233). For Weizman, our humanitarian present is hence an ‘economy of violence’ which crystallises in assemblages of spatial organisations, regulatory regimes, and numerical calculations that are deployed ‘for governing the displaced, the enemy and the unwanted’ (Weizman 2011, 3–4).

Paternalistic humanitarian interventions have in this respect transformed into a veritable ‘colonialism of compassion’ in the postcolonial South (Hyndman 2000, 60). Refugee camps spatialise these unequal relations as ‘new configurations of sovereign power’ (Gregory 2004) that mimic and extend the structure of colonial spatial domination and violence into the present. To speak with Achille Mbembe, the violence characteristic of postcolonial space is omnipresent and assumes multiple spatialised, immediate, visible, ritualised and material forms (Mbembe 2001, 175). As camps often contain subaltern and formerly colonised populations, violence is encrypted in their governance structure and exemplified by (but not limited to) the biopolitical surveillance of calories, head-counts, and hygiene (Hyndman 2000; Newhouse 2015; Jaji 2012), the legalisms which conjugate inclusion and exclusion through discriminatory grammars of eligibility, classification and status (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005; Glasman 2017), and the ontological insecurities of

undignified limbo and warehousing in secluded camps (Agier 2011; Hyndman and Giles 2016). Humanitarian technologies, operational procedures, routines and materialities, however, are always interwoven with regimes of militarised policing which are integral to administering camps. Branch contends that in Uganda, camps ‘were only able to exist because of [...] the violence of the Ugandan state in forcing people into them, preventing people from leaving, and repressing political organisation’ (Branch 2009, 478). In other words, humanitarian governance does not simply yield symbolic, ritualised and (bio)political violence(s), but mobilises miscellaneous sociospatial and assaultive forms of violence in order to assert authority over refugees.

Kakuma camp was first established to receive refugees from the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005) and later others from Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, DR Congo, Burundi and Eritrea (UNHCR 2018). In light of multiple histories of violent displacement and their symbolic purchase in refugee lives, Jansen regards violence in Kakuma as preeminent in ordering social relations (Jansen 2018, 78). Though unintended, this reproduces imaginaries of Kenyan camps as fraught with disorder, inadvertently justifying police operations as attempts to restore ‘order’ (Crisp 2000; Cannon and Fujibayashi 2018). However, shifting our gaze more critically towards the technologies through which violence is spatialised and instantiated in the camp, we recognise features typically found in spaces under occupation that force us to rethink the violent geographies of camps accordingly. Although humanitarian occupation is sometimes understood as shorthand for extraterritorial patronage over nation-states by international bodies like the UN (Fox 2008; Nunan 2016), I focus more concretely on the spatial formations which embody the collusion between humanitarian and state power and produce micro-geographies

and spatial designs aimed at immobilising, enframing, and controlling populations. Camps and occupied spaces alike thus organise notions of exception in ‘a permanent spatial arrangement’ (Agamben 1998, 169), which lies simultaneously inside *and* outside the normal order, and have comparable spatial effects. As a consequence, humanitarianism not only legitimises and enables military occupations in conflict zones (Visweswaran 2013, 9; Lopez, Bhungalia, and Newhouse 2015, 2235), but the very practices, political materialities and sociospatial technologies of occupation conversely diffuse into the everyday spatial ordering of refugee camps, where the after-effects of conflicts are supposedly alleviated.

Viewed through this prism, Kakuma camp resembles the occupied enclaves that Peteet described in Palestine as ‘surrounded by a state, where concentrated and confined populations, often culturally distinct and excluded from the state, are subject to its detailed regulations, which include severe restrictions on and close monitoring of place of residency and, most prominently, the scope and speed of mobility’ (Peteet 2015, 225). As the largest conurbation in Turkana, even surpassing the county capital Lodwar⁷⁶, Kakuma camp is populated by foreign citizens who either hold refugee status or hope to receive it. This highly concentrated space was formally designated as a camp in Kenyan legislation in 2014 (GoK 2014a, 2014b) and is subject to an array of exceptional regulations, since refugees are not permitted to reside outside camps. Though I do not claim that encampment in Kakuma produces a sovereign exception by which refugees are relegated to political abjection and turned into ‘bare life’ (Agamben 1998; Edkins 2000), as a narrow exegesis of Agamben suggests, it is important to note that the camp is governed differentially from other parts of Kenya, due to special institutional arrangements between the state

⁷⁶ Kenya’s last census in 2009 puts Lodwar’s population at 58,218.

and UNHCR, something Oesch has characterised in Palestinian camps as an ‘administrative exception’ (Oesch 2017, 111). Not unlike the states of emergency emerging under occupation (Calhoun 2010), this denotes a territorial inclusion of the camp in Kenya but its administrative exclusion, not only because of a divestment of public services to humanitarian agencies, but also in terms of the policing practices deemed necessary and acceptable within its perimeters.

Borrowing from Ramadan’s influential work on camps in Lebanon (Ramadan, 2012, p. 73), the Kakuma camp could be described as simultaneously in Kenya but not *of* Kenya. This differential governance is further amplified by postcolonial constructions of Turkana itself as an ‘operational area’ territorially apart from the south (Lind, 2017; see Fig. 16). A high-ranking official of Kenya’s Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) explained, ‘[operational] areas are treated as if residents are collectively guilty of something [...]. So, when they name a place “operational area”, run away because they will come there, the paramilitary will burn everything down, police will shoot anybody on sight, they can even shoot cows’⁷⁷. When officers of the Kenya Police Service (KPS) are deployed there, they undergo a metamorphosis and swap their ‘down country’ uniforms – black trousers and blue shirts – for full olive-green uniforms, complete with boonie hats and flak jackets as signs of entering a military zone⁷⁸. While Maingi and Omeje (2012) argue that policing in Kakuma reflects the fragile, episodic and spatially dispersed modes of state control characteristic of operational areas generally, the refugee camp has in fact solidified these spatial practices of militarised policing in one geographical location, and thus turned mobile interventions into a fortified permanent assemblage

⁷⁷ Interview, Nairobi, 15.08.2017.

⁷⁸ Interview with senior KP officer, Kakuma, 05.02.2017.

of occupation. The existing geographies of (post)colonial state repression (Anderson, 2014; Mkutu & Wandera, 2013), and the striving for order in Kenya's humanitarian present (Agier 2011; Jaji 2012) have produced overlapping regimes of exception which remove the camp from prospects of civil and 'democratic policing' based on procedural justice and accountability (Skilling 2016; Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003). Instead, they reaffirm the camp's subjection to 'emergency policing' in which spatial exclusion, indiscriminate force, and punitive operations represent the norm.

Akin to comparable assemblages of occupation, numerous facets of life in the Kakuma camp are suffused with rationalities of foreign control and thus 'occupied' (Handel 2016). The physical camp landscape is defined by humanitarian planning (Jaji 2012), the camp's economy is intertwined with the logics of aid (Perouse De Montclos and Kagwanja 2000), the minds of refugees are colonised with discourses about protection, rights, and vulnerability (Jansen 2008; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010), and complex subjectivities evolved through the power differentials between refugees, humanitarians, and the police which equal the subjectification processes of colonial domination (Mbembe 2001; Gren 2015). However, following existing research on the geographies of occupation (Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban 2011; Weizman 2012; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009), I here focus on the sociospatial mechanics of domination which interfere the most in the everyday lives and (im)mobilities of encamped refugees. The enclavisation of Kakuma refugee camp is the product of a convergence of the spatial processes and rationalities of humanitarian intervention with the geographies of power embedded in Kenya's postcolonial state. Hence, the 'occupied enclave' is an assemblage of complementary domains of control which encompasses an architecture of material barriers and devices, inimical bureaucracies, policing practices that inflict physical harm on refugee bodies, and strategies of

material extraction. Notwithstanding their respective specificities, these domains are not separate but co-produce the spatial effects of humanitarian occupation through everyday enactment by Kenyan police in the camp.



Figure 16: Kenyan counties with ‘operational areas’ in grey (source: author).

Kakuma refugee camp: The making of an occupation

Since 1992, the Government of Kenya (GoK) has imposed movement restrictions on refugees and decreed their *de facto* encampment in the country’s north (Campbell

2006). However, until mid-1996, police presence in Kakuma town was sparse, and only about 15 Kenya Police (KP) officers and one Administration Police (AP) unit were stationed there⁷⁹. This division harks back to the colonial state in which the KP operated in urban areas and liaised with public prosecution, while the paramilitary AP was tasked with regime protection and deployed in the hinterland (Anderson, 1991; Nyabola, 2016; Waller, 2010). Although the distinctions between civil and paramilitary policing were blurry under (post)colonial administrations, the use of military-style tactics, hardware, culture, and brute force was particularly pronounced along pastoralist fringes like Turkana (Waller 2010). In the early 1990s, UNHCR led a *laissez-faire* administration in Kakuma camp that relied on customary leaders for dispensing material assistance. This changed when UNHCR introduced individual-based food distribution in 1996, triggering discontented Southern Sudanese to hold a number of UNHCR employees hostage and demand consultations about the new scheme. One affected UNHCR officer remembers:

The police had to come and fired live rounds, at around 6.00 PM we were finally rescued. That very night, the community leaders mobilised the Sudanese youth and they vandalised everything in the Social Services centre [...]; and as if that wasn't enough, from there they moved to the half-finished new food distribution centre [...] and demolished everything; After that, the government and UNHCR were so annoyed, I think some leaders were arrested and taken to Lodwar. The government ordered that all services for refugees be suspended until refugees repair the damaged centres and agree for the new system to start operating. We were all sent on temporary leave. It was a government order.

The installation of the humanitarian biopolitical technology of the distribution centre, which in itself enables violence through surveillance, discipline, and gender discrimination (Hyndman 2000; Agier 2011; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005), was only possible with armed enforcement from Kenyan police. UNHCR and the

⁷⁹ Interviews inter alia with an Ethiopian refugee who arrived in 1993, Kakuma, 24.02.2017, and an AP officer who served in Kakuma in the 1990s, 06.09.2018.

government had no intention to consult refugees but were prepared to manage Kakuma camp like an occupying power⁸⁰. The stand-off showed how fragile UNHCR's authority was and that it depended on batons, guns and the invocation of emergency to retain control⁸¹. This echoes Branch's reflections on Ugandan camps in which state violence and humanitarian care were mutually dependent (Branch 2009, 480). With Kakuma growing in size, police forces, too, followed suit. Kakuma underwent a massive expansion from the first camp 'phase' built in 1992, to Kakuma 2 in 1997, Kakuma 3 in 2002, and Kakuma 4 which was built in early 2014 to shelter refugees fleeing South Sudan's new civil war⁸². Gradually, the face of the camp was refashioned architecturally through increased fortification and new police posts springing up inside the camp (see Fig. 17). From the early 2000s, the notorious General Service Unit (GSU)⁸³ paramilitary stationed in Lokichogio was called in more regularly to 'pacify the camp'⁸⁴, until an entire platoon was moved permanently to Kakuma at the request of UNHCR in 2008⁸⁵.

In 2011, the same year as Kenya's invasion and military occupation of southern Somalia (Anderson & McKnight, 2015), UNHCR and the Kenyan government formalised their security collaboration in a Security Partnership Project (SPP) that would provide millions of dollars per year for police operations in refugee camps (UNHCR 2012). During the first three years alone (2011-2014), UNHCR

⁸⁰ Legitimate urban spaces for refugees were also diminished as the Kenyan government ordered all refugees to 'return' to the camps in 1998 see Campbell (2006).

⁸¹ Punitive interventions were common practice, e.g. in 1996, 2003, 2014 and during my research between 2016 and 2017. Based on interviews in Kakuma with refugees, 01.06.2017 and 18.05.2017, LWF staff, 03.04.2017, and UNHCR staff, 20.07.2017. See also Schechter (2004).

⁸² Interview with UNHCR officer, 21.07.2017.; See also Jansen (2018).

⁸³ The GSU is frequently used against urban protesters and for special operations in liaison with the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) along the northern frontier.

⁸⁴ This language of pacification unmistakably echoes the mode of colonial occupation in the border regions between Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan.

⁸⁵ Interview with UNHCR's Security chief who formulated the request to the government, Kakuma, 27.01.2017.

injected over \$25 million in the form of fuel subsidies, staff housing and monthly allowances⁸⁶ into the police (UNHCR 2016, 41). Although militarisation has been integral to policing in the Kenyan peripheries for decades, humanitarian sponsorship generated new incentives for the state to fortify its grip over remote camps, including Kakuma. In addition to KP and AP officers, who account for the bulk of armed personnel in Kakuma, the GoK also sent special investigative units like the Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU) and the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI) to deal with serious crimes, intelligence gathering, and countering terrorist threats in the camp⁸⁷. With over 196 officers, Kakuma has a relatively high police ratio for a peripheral subcounty like Turkana-West (UNHCR 2018). SPP-induced police subsidies, and their alignment with Kenya's own strategy in its 'war on terror' (Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom 2017), in which camps were portrayed as susceptible to *Al-Shabaab* infiltration, contributed to this situation. Problematically, UNHCR continued to fuel this militarisation by asking the GoK to ensure the 'civilian and humanitarian character' of the camps (UNHCR 2017a).

As a result, refugees in Kenya were increasingly targeted through anti-asylum raids like *Operation Usalama Watch*⁸⁸ in Nairobi's Eastleigh that limited safe spaces outside of the camps (Balakian 2016; IPOA 2014). Two years later, the GoK finally disbanded the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) whose bureaucrats it had long deemed too 'humanitarian-minded' and replaced them with hard-line (ex)military officers. Kakuma's new camp managers had little concern for refugee protection, as they served in dual capacity for both the newly-established Refugee Affairs

⁸⁶ In March 2017, UNHCR donated an additional 43 police vehicles to police in the Kakuma and Dadaab camps (Muraya 2017). Officers stationed in refugee camps receive a monthly allowance between \$50-\$140. Communication with UNHCR security advisor, Kakuma, 18.08.2017.

⁸⁷ Interview with police commander, Kakuma, 02.03.2017.

⁸⁸ Kiswahili: Operation Security Watch, officially: 'Operation Sanitization of Eastleigh' in April 2014.

Secretariat (RAS) and the National Intelligence Service (NIS), and authorised raids and arrests in the camp⁸⁹. Foreshadowed by the gradual spatial fortification and militarisation of camp space since the 1990s, this unapologetic merging of counter-terrorism and anti-refugee policies ushered in a new apogee of occupation in the camp.



Figure 17: Distribution of police infrastructure in Kakuma (source: author).

Architecture: roadblocks, patrol bases, compounds

The first impression one gets of Kakuma, when driving on the dilapidated road from Lodwar to the border town of Lockichogio, is an iron-roofed shack and a spike barrier in the middle of the road. ‘Lokoree’ roadblock demarcates the outer border between the camp and the Turkana countryside. Seemingly mundane sites like this constitute

⁸⁹ Interview with senior LWF staff, Kakuma, 21.07.2017; Conversation with senior RAS official involved in the reshuffle, Kakuma, 14.12.2016. The author was present when RAS managers ordered refugee arrests on multiple occasions.

a material architecture of occupation inscribed into the landscape of Kakuma, encompassing checkpoints, patrol bases, police stations, and barbed-wire fences, erected for containment and control (see Jaji, 2012; and Fig.1). Building on Fanon and Weizman (Weizman 2012; Fanon 2004), Mbembe notes that occupiers often splinter the territories they administer 'into a web of intricate internal borders and various isolated cells' (Mbembe 2003, 28), the most archetypical example of which are checkpoints in the Palestinian territories (Amir 2013; Rijke and Minca 2018). Though roadblocks in Kakuma are not technologically advanced, but use analogue modes of surveillance, they perform similar decisions over inclusion/exclusion, and enact the asymmetries between the police and refugees, that emulate military administrations (Parsons and Salter 2008). While I passed these roadblocks more than fifty times during fieldwork, I only received permission to spend two days at Lokoree, where I noted (10.02.2017):

Whenever a vehicle approaches the roadblock, one or two of the officers armed with AK-47 rifles get up and inspect the boot, question passengers and the driver. If they look or sound like refugees of a particular ethnicity, they are asked for their movement passes and refugee IDs. If they are Kenyans or non-refugees, a valid national ID is sufficient, as long as one isn't suspected of being a refugee. Many Turkana who don't possess documents can travel without them.

This checkpoint routine reinforces a racialised, ethnicised, and legal categorisation of belonging sedimented in moments of passage. Passengers are scanned for accents and physiognomy which may expose someone as South Sudanese, Congolese, or Somali. Officers become discretionary enforcers of embodied state order by making personalised decisions of who can and cannot pass (Herbert, 1996; Mountz, 2004). Newhouse suggests that this renders Kakuma's roadblocks not signifiers of a system of total closure, but rather that porosity and selective permeability are in-built in

mutable logics of (im)mobility (Newhouse 2015, 2298). Refugees are required to carry RAS movement passes to exit the camp and have to produce them at a series of roadblocks along the Lodwar-Lokichogio highway on their way ‘down country’. Without official permit, refugees pay bribes of up to 5,000 Kenya shillings (\$50) to be allowed to travel. For a journey from Kakuma to Eldoret, Kitale or Nairobi, refugees must in addition to regular bus fares calculate the cumulative bribes they are expected to pay (see Pavanello, Elhawary, & Pantuliano, 2010). While these modes of police accumulation are common on roads across Africa (Beek 2017; Hope 2018), Kakuma’s roadblock are simultaneously (bio)political technologies which serve domestic ‘border enforcement’ and categorise citizens and refugees into mobility hierarchies. Discrimination and humiliation are a daily occurrence, thus making checkpoints ‘condensation point[s] for intersecting manifestations of violence’ (Newhouse 2015, 2300). Several times during my observations at Lokoree, buses were stopped, their passengers questioned about their ethnic identity (*kabila*) and ordered to ‘sit on the ground’ (*kaa chini*) while police officers issued threats of beatings and used derogatory language to intimidate and degrade individuals⁹⁰.

In symmetry with this coercive policing of the camp’s boundaries, UNHCR funded the expansion of police bases in Kakuma itself (Fig.1), even before the SPP formalised this relation in 2011. One of the first was the AP ‘Rajaf’ post whose construction manifested the liberal ideal of bringing police ‘closer’ to refugees, while inadvertently decentralising militarised repression. While most posts are enclosed by mesh and barbed wire fences, some have watchtowers from which the surrounding areas can be surveilled. This architectural fortification of police presence in the camp

⁹⁰ A common slur is *kichwa ngumu*, a colloquial Kenyan term that denotes ‘hard-headedness’ and implies an incapacity to comprehend.

was not coincidental but followed the precedent of humanitarian organisations in Kakuma that had erected militarised compounds, perimeter fences, barbed-wire and concrete barriers early-on (Jansen 2018; Schechter 2004).



Figure 18: 'Rajaf' Administration Police Base, Kakuma 1 (source: author).

A similar architecture that is deployed as a protective shield against insurgents or occupied populations in besieged areas, has equally come to embody the anticipatory violence of a fragile humanitarian order in camps. Ironically, placing police bases deep into Kakuma eroded possibilities for police oversight, partitioning the camp into small-sized police territories (Herbert, 1996) which became virtual islands of control under the command of individual corporals or sergeants with unchecked discretionary powers. On my visits to Rajaf and other bases, I witnessed refugees being detained, forced to work for officers to 'atone' for alleged crimes, or simply

humiliated in performances of superiority, sometimes for hours on end. The architectural system of roadblocks, bases and compounds thus has a critical role in spatially grounding such oppressive strategies through providing material infrastructures and devices needed for their implementation. Architecture as a domain of the wider assemblage of occupation drives the topographical enclavisation of the Kakuma camp and marks its external and internal boundaries with ‘bottlenecks’ and ‘anchor points’ of police power that embody the spatial formations humanitarian violence produces.

Bureaucracy: papers, permits, curfews

If roadblocks and patrol bases are the infrastructural nodes of a system of occupation designed to discipline and monitor refugees, permits and papers are the bureaucratic currency needed for people’s circulation *within* and *beyond* the camp. To speak with Foucault, this currency ‘places individuals in a field of surveillance [and] also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them’ (Foucault 1995, 189). RAS issues movement passes only to refugees considered to have legitimate reasons for venturing outside Kakuma for specialist medical treatment, secondary or university education in southern Kenya⁹¹. This bureaucracy that fixates refugees in their assigned space of residence (the camp), and monitors their every move, resembles not only surveillance in modern colonial occupations (Berda 2017; Mbembe 2003), but equally rekindles Kenya’s own colonial *kipande* system in which Africans had to produce ID cards (*kipande*) when leaving ‘native reserves’ in search for employment (Berman 1990, 147). Kenya’s

⁹¹ Based on a series of documents released by a self-proclaimed ‘Refugee Research Team’ (RRT) on 16.01.2017. The RRT aimed to make public institutional misconduct in UNHCR, RAS, and NGOs and the police in Kakuma.

postcolonial regimes recognised this efficacy of *kipande* in cementing the servile status of citizens/subjects and prolonged its validity even after independence to monitor the spatial and temporal mobility of Kenya's Somali minority. Somali-Kenyans continued to be restricted in their movements and segregated in designated districts in an attempt to fixate their identities territorially and govern a supposedly alien population in military fashion (Lochery 2012, 620–23).

In Kenya's humanitarian present, the same technologies have re-emerged, creating new topographies of differentiation that categorise refugees in reference to their statuses, designated camp and eligibility for movement passes. As has been noted by others (Berda 2017; Rijke and Minca 2018), intrinsic to permit regimes under occupation are also notions of arbitrariness and uncertainty over decision-making and the powers that individual officers or bureaucrats possess to invoke sovereign exceptions (Agamben 1998). Kakuma's police station commander (OCS) is in an unparalleled position to grant or withhold permissions and hence personifies the ability of the police to intervene at will in the lives of refugee subjects. A senior RAS officer explained, 'everyone gravitates towards the OCS and his office, [because] that's where the *real* power lies'⁹². Refugees must apply for explicit permission from the OCS for any festivity, wedding, funeral, football match, party, dance, and autonomous social event⁹³. This bureaucratisation of social life puts the OCS *de facto* in the role of a camp governor and enacts the everyday citizen-refugee binary that is legally anchored in the administrative exception. For a wedding ceremony among South Sudanese Nuer refugees the OCS issued the following letter in 2017:

⁹² Conversation, Kakuma, 17.02.2017.

⁹³ Interview with Head of LWF Security, 18.08.2016.

Permission has been granted to faithful's of ----- of mobile no. ----- to hold the above-mentioned occasion today --/--/2017 starting from 11.00 AM to 6:00 PM at his home compound in Kakuma --- zone --- block 1. Law and order must be maintained all through the ceremony and thereafter. Noise and loud music will not be allowed. All participants to the ceremony must be confined within the specified venue. The stipulated time frame must be observed. Contravention or failure to observe the conditions given herewith will lead to arrest and subsequent prosecution. Signed -----, O.C.S. Kakuma Police Station.

This permission letter shows how the Kenyan state and its police activate the 'power of writing' (Foucault 1995, 189) to diminish the dignity of refugees with bureaucratic procedures. Thus, minor wrongdoing such as 'rogue socialisation', loud noise or breaches of stipulated time limits are considered acts of insubordination against the police regime and become punishable crimes. In conjunction with movement passes, the permits place not only spatial restrictions on refugees in the camp but also curtails and suspend autonomous socialities and spacio-temporal freedoms in refugees' daily lives. LWF's security chief rationalised and normalised the exceptionality of these rules when addressing newly-arrived refugees, obscuring the fact that the state declares a state of emergency in the camp which does *not* apply to the rest of the country, stating 'Kenyan law is [just] very different from wherever you come from!'⁹⁴.

While it has become habitual for the GoK to declare emergencies and curfews following 'terror attacks' in Wajir, Mandera, Garissa or Lamu⁹⁵, Kakuma camp has been subject to such exceptional measures uninterruptedly for over a decade (Jansen, 2018; Mwangi, 2005). In her work on Karenni refugees, Jolliffe argues that curfews in camps serve as 'artificial markers of nightfall', which induce an "automatic shift of practical authority on a quotidian basis" (Jolliffe 2015, 4). Even though the

⁹⁴ LWF Security awareness training, Kakuma 1, 18.08.2016.

⁹⁵ The GoK has repeatedly imposed curfews on Mandera, Lamu, Waji and other counties since 2014 via public notifications in the Kenya Gazette, available online: http://kenyalaw.org/kenya_gazette/.

administrative separation of responsibilities between the GoK and UNHCR is a cornerstone of camp governance, the daily curfew signals a temporary revocation of humanitarian jurisdiction and restored all powers in the hands of the police. None other than police vehicles are allowed to enter the camp at night, and even RAS officials must ask for prior permission⁹⁶. Refugees are required to remain in the camp between 6:00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. and inside their homes past 8:00 p.m. Meanwhile, enforcement is asymmetrical and highly selective, affording more leniency to local Turkana or refugees with personal ties to police officers. This irregular application of regulations suggests that public and personal safety is not the paramount rationale of the curfew, a point which the subcounty police commander inadvertently confirmed when conceding that compared to other Kenyan towns crime rates in Kakuma are not unusually high⁹⁷.

Nonetheless, during a security meeting before Christmas 2016, UNHCR's security chief handed a list of 'special security measures' to the OCS, demanding restaurants and shops closed at 8:00 p.m., bars and clubs at 11:00 p.m., fearing a holiday-related uptick in crime⁹⁸. As the police were asked to conduct additional patrols, UNHCR offered even more fuel and logistical support to ensure the 'compliance' of refugees. Although refugees try to resist and circumvent such regulations, permits and curfews are invasive bureaucratic technologies which regulate the cadences and spatio-temporalities of everyday life in the camp and are hence both disciplinary and biopolitical in their effects. In the absence of separation walls, this system of bureaucratic exclusion wraps like a paper-thin membrane around the camp enclave and complements visible architectures of occupation with

⁹⁶ The RAS deputy camp manager called the OCS to ask for permission, Kakuma, 17.02.2017.

⁹⁷ Interview, Kakuma, 02.03.2017.

⁹⁸ Conversations with two KP policemen who have served in the camp for six years, 21.11.2016, and an interview with UNHCR's security chief, 27.01.2017.

the rationalised power of documents that implies the constant possibility of their denial or suspension. Oppressive bureaucracies are thus a notable feature of the wider geographies of occupation (Visweswaran 2013; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010) which has diffused into the everyday workings of humanitarian camps.



Figure 19: Police checking passengers at ‘Lokoree’ roadblock (source: author).

Physical force: incarceration and collective punishment

The occupied humanitarian camp is a contemporary space of power which hinges on a ‘diffuse field of forces’ that ‘surrounds, immerses and embeds’ (Weizman 2011, 23) its subjects in simultaneously benign, rationalised and aggressive forms of ordering. Like in most occupation regimes, the exercise of unrestrained physical force (or threat thereof) in Kakuma is invariably part of wider strategies of domination and find their expression most tangibly in carceral micro-geographies that underpin police practices such as round-ups and raids (Mwangi, 2005, p. 144), and the application of collective

punishment towards selected groups. Exemplary for the former is an episode which Pierre, a 28-year-old Burundian refugee, witnessed on 25 December 2017, when police vehicles stopped at a popular club in Kakuma 3. Three hours before the shutdown at 11 p.m., the place was still full of customers dancing, drinking beers, and eating barbequed meat (*nyama choma*), when armed police surrounded the premises and started arrests. Pierre recalls, 'the [police] vehicles went back and forth that night. One [officer] remained and waited for them to come back. They came back five times to pick more people, over 110 from this bar alone'. Pierre stood by as *askaris* blocked all exits to prevent anyone from escaping, as police cells across Kakuma quickly filled up. This incident is not unique but follows common scripts of carceral policing by which refugees are put in cells as punitive measures or to extort money (see next section)⁹⁹. Although much has been written about the carcerality of camps (Minca 2015; Moran, Gill, and Colon 2016), relatively little is known about incarceration as a governing strategy *within* camps. Israeli's military control of the Palestinian territories, too, relies on the prison as the local technological manifestation of a carceral system on a much wider scale (Bornstein 2008). The homogenising containment of the camp's refugee population, and the targeted confinement of individual refugee detainees in cells have fostered a comparable system of graduated carceralisation in Kakuma camp. However, diverging from Foucaultian understandings of the prison as a modern technology of reform and discipline (Foucault 1995), Kakuma's carceral microgeographies are indicative of more brute forms of population control, aimed at disrupting sociality and suppressing the persistence of hospitable refugee spaces with militarised means.

⁹⁹ Interviews with two UNHCR protection staff, Kakuma, 20.07.2017 and 28.07.2017.

In accordance with this targeting of the collective and individual spatialities of governed bodies, policing has in the past included performances of collective punishment against groups deemed particularly ‘troublesome’ in the camp. Following inter-communal conflicts between subgroups of Kakuma’s Nuer, Dinka, Burundian and Congolese youth in Kakuma 4 in late 2014 (KANERE 2014), during which almost twenty people were killed and hundreds displaced, the police decided an entire ethnic community should be punished for the unrest. The sub-county commander (OCPD) of Turkana-West explained,

It was [difficult], but I just sat down and thought what I should do, and I realised the main culprits of this issue are the Nuer. So, I called the officers and told them we should do an operation. We had to go from house to house, [...] getting boys, taking them out and beating them seriously, indiscriminately. The cells were full, even in Lodwar. Those who could run away went to South Sudan, by foot. And of course, we did this having received affirmation from the HSO [UNHCR Head of Sub-Office].

Although it is uncertain whether UNHCR actually endorsed the operation as a way of upholding ‘camp order’, the agency’s continuing collaboration and financial support for the police at least suggests a quiet toleration of punitive policing, while publicly disavowing the damaging effects these have on refugees. This episode brings to mind not only the collective attribution of guilt to occupied peoples under contemporary emergency rule (Weizman 2012; Duschinski and Bhan 2017), but also conjures up Kenya’s (post)colonial histories of violence in which ethnic minorities and precarious citizens like the Somalis have been forcibly villagised, displaced and executed (Anderson, 2014; Whittaker, 2015). But even in Kakuma, the more spectacular forms of collective violence used against the Nuer youth, which were supposed to ‘pacify’ the camp, were anything but unusual. Rather, they followed established patterns of police intervention. Earlier that year, the police staged a mass

raid in the South Sudanese 'Equatoria community' after an AP officer, accused of attempted rape, had been repelled by refugee residents¹⁰⁰. Occupation therefore not only violently re-spatialises the camp's neighbourhoods through militarised police incursions, round-ups and mass imprisonment, but also ruptures the cohesion of whole communities while etching feelings of subjugation into refugee bodies. Commenting on the salience of occupation in Kakuma, Bosco, a Congolese refugee who has lived in the camp for a decade, remarked 'the police here are like rebels attacking a village!'¹⁰¹. Intermittent pacification campaigns are lucid reminders of the assaultive and corporeal violence which undergirds the mundane and perhaps less conspicuous spatial domination otherwise saturating the occupied enclave. Invocations of 'emergency' and exception (Agamben 1998) again lay bare that, underneath the thin veneer of humanitarian civility, the mobilisation of physical force is always an ultimate possibility.

Extraction: digging bribes as resource control

A fourth domain in the assemblage of occupation in Kakuma camp is material extraction, whose rationalities are closely bound up with and impact the everyday workings of other technologies of control like roadblocks, police bases and permits. Before oil was discovered in Turkana-South in 2012, the humanitarian industry was the biggest and most lucrative stream of income and employment opportunities for the county and arguably remains so today (Enns and Bersaglio 2015). Likewise, Kakuma refugee camp represents not only a place of refuge from conflicts at home, but also a livelihood option and opportunity for refugees to 'dig aid' in search of a

¹⁰⁰ Group meeting with LWF refugee local security staff, 31.07.2017.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Kakuma, 10.08.2017.

more prosperous future (Jansen 2016). However, the forced encampment of a noncitizen population with precarious rights and life chances has created fertile conditions for the camp to additionally become a hub for more predatory forms of accumulation.

In 2001, a UN report uncovered crimes committed by UNHCR staff who, together with police officers and NGO workers, engaged in refugee smuggling and systematic extortion from refugees (OIOS 2001). Though this reflects to some degree prevalent institutional malpractices in Kenya and its police generally (Hope, 2018; Mwangi, 2008), it has a particular quality as it affects a spatially secluded, forcibly immobilised and noncitizen population which is nominally under the joint protection of UNHCR and the state. More recent investigations by the UNHCR's Inspector General's Office (IGO) indicate that criminal networks continue to pervade the camp organisation, most prominently UNHCR and the police. While a great number of officers extort petty amounts of money on a regular basis, others are part of more organised criminal networks which orchestrate money extraction from refugees on a massive scale. A high-ranking UNHCR insider with in-depth knowledge of the investigations has referred to these connections between the police and humanitarians as the 'humanitarian aid cartel'¹⁰². On multiple occasions, officials from UNHCR, NGOs and the government recalled having been approached and urged by police officers to come 'into the fold' being lured with a share of prospective exploits¹⁰³. In May 2017, five UNHCR workers were suspended on suspicion of fraud, while their cases were (ironically) transferred to the Kenyan police for further investigations (UNHCR 2017b). Though UNHCR has signalled its willingness to

¹⁰² Personal communication, May 2017.

¹⁰³ Conversations in Kakuma, 25.01.2017, 29.05.2017, 19.07.2017, and 20.07.2017.

dispel allegations of misconduct and review its operations, likely under pressure from major donors, extortion exists not only as the rather opportunistic ‘violence of *kitu kidogo*’ (Newhouse 2015, 2298), but forms part of a larger assemblage of occupation that exercises control over refugee movements and financial resources.

The fact this unfolds in a humanitarian enclave in Kenya’s periphery is not a mere matter of circumstance but speaks to the ways in which resource extraction across Africa has typically taken place in enclaves, where extraterritorial accumulation could more easily materialise and be protected (Côte and Korf 2018; Ferguson 2005). But while conventional forms of extraction, like the burgeoning oil production in Turkana-South, focus on unearthing natural resources, the geographies of accumulation in Kakuma camp target the livelihoods of the refugees themselves, inserting them in a microeconomy based on ‘digging bribes’. Aristide, a 40-year-old Congolese refugee who has lived in Kakuma for years, explains how this works in practice:

Every little criminal they get their hands on makes money. I’ve seen endless cases of people entering and leaving the cells. 500, 1000, 1500 Kenya Shillings and you’re out, depending on what you have done. If you’re in the right it doesn’t mean that you will get away. People pay good money for “being in the right”. Once you paid 3000 or 5000 Shillings they’ll shout at the other person: “why are you making this guy’s life so difficult, what’s your problem?”

Aristide’s description not only situates resource control and extraction in the wider context of incarceration and spatial control in the camp, but also recognises that refugees can at times exert agency and manipulate detrimental power differentials by deploying corruption in their favour. Popular perceptions among police officers and humanitarians alike, that certain refugees like Somalis are ‘business-savvy’ and have easy access to remittances from abroad, exacerbate these predations and make them

objects of envy from often poorly-paid officers¹⁰⁴. While it is known that extortion from refugees is common both in the camps *and* Kenya's urban centres (Balakian 2016), the legal frameworks and material architectures which spatially fixate refugees in camps have at least aggravated their susceptibility to exploitation. While occupation regimes are never reducible to it, resource control is nonetheless often woven either into their initial legitimation or the agenda behind their continuation (Shelley 2006; Stirk 2009; Duschinski and Bhan 2017, 258). In this sense, Kakuma camp's assemblage of occupation co-implicates material devices of (im)mobilisation, bureaucratic technologies, and strategic exertion of physical force against refugees in the violent and highly profitable endeavour of enforcing humanitarian order.

Conclusion

Humanitarian operations inevitably exert violence through (bio)political technologies that are deemed a practical necessity for delivering assistance to large refugee populations. At the same time, they produce distinct spatial formations such as camps, aid archipelagos, and enclaves whose micro-geographies are reminiscent of the spatial arrangements that characterise military occupations. This design of violent spatial control, and the policing of refugee camps generally, have only featured marginally in the existing literature and therefore warrant more detailed attention. In this article, I have analysed militarised policing in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya through four complementary domains of control which comprise material architecture, bureaucracy, physical force, and resource extraction. Together, these domains form an assemblage of occupation that impacts the

¹⁰⁴ Conversation with KP officer on leave, Nairobi, 29.04.2017. This notion is common among officers and other officials, documented e.g. on 14.01.2017 and 27.01.2017.

mobilities of refugees and prescribes the contours of their everyday lives in mundane and at times spectacular (yet always violent) ways. As a consequence, the refugee camp is recast as a territorially demarcated humanitarian space under militarised administration: an ‘occupied enclave’.

This article has demonstrated the importance of paramilitary policing for consolidating the humanitarian power in camps and pointed at its sensitive reliance on established notions of ‘exception’ to legitimise and enact the socio-spatial restrictions imposed on refugees. While most police officers are small cogs who follow orders and bide their time in search for better pay or a transfer further south, the cumulative effects of their banal actions and practices in the camp are what make the spatial effectuation of occupation possible in the first place. Refugees naturally mediate this coercive regime by forging clandestine alliances with officers, avoiding regular encounters, or undermining their authority by simply circumventing rules and paying bribes. This then reiterates the camp not only as a space of exception but also of ‘potentiality’ (Martin 2015). During a protest in Kakuma’s Somali market in July 2017, refugees held placards with the unequivocal message: ‘Fuck Police, Fuck OCS!’. Occupation thus does not reduce refugees to abject positions of ‘bare life’ but it stimulates strategies of resistance and accommodation instead. However, this inevitability of negotiation and emerging agency does not preclude the camp as a technology of repression, but rather modifies the manner in which power affects the individual. The administrative exception that sets the camp juridically apart from other parts of Kenya is actualised through spatial interventions which regulate entries and exits, fragment the camp’s internal geographies, and place refugee subjects in a system of surveillance. This not only aims to control their movements in space, but also dictate the rhythms of their everyday lives and socialities. While these practices

of domination always remain partial and incomplete, the occupied enclave nevertheless constitutes an illustrative space for the violence that pervades our 'humanitarian present' (Weizman 2011).

Echoing methods of policing found in occupations across the world (Weizman 2012; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009; Visweswaran 2013), refugee camps combine humanitarian rationalities and (bio)political technologies with more overtly repressive spatial strategies of control. In Kakuma camp, police bases and roadblocks operate in conjunction with circuitous bureaucratic regimes that foster a permanent uncertainty over the denial of movement into, out, and within the camp. This is supplemented with police operations that resemble more the military incursions into an occupied territory than the procedural forms of protection and public safety that humanitarian organisations propagate. Police control over the modalities of refugee mobility in Kakuma has further created a fertile environment where extraction of monetary resources from the occupied populace is both an incentive *for* as well as the logical conclusion *of* occupation. Kakuma's position at the interface of multiple marginalities, spatial imaginaries of exclusion, and juridical exceptions has fomented these processes and made supposedly unruly refugees a convenient target for a domestic occupation that feeds on the promise of aid.

This article therefore charts ways for much needed debates on the spatial production of humanitarian violence, and in particular on the geographies of occupation which underlie the governance structures of refugee camps in swaths of Africa and the global South more broadly. While much invaluable work has discussed the complicities of humanitarianism with the causes of empire (Agier 2011; Barnett 2011; Hyndman 2000), the spatial instantiation of that relation through modes of policing has remained vastly underexplored. More focus should be placed

on the violent everyday spatialities that are (re)produced in its wake and imbricate a peculiar blend of colonial and humanitarian modes of governing enemy, mobile, and displaced populations. While humanitarianism has been a ‘benevolent’ auxiliary to military interventions, especially in postcolonial societies, it is also important to recognise that its own topographies of relief in ostensibly ‘safe’ refugee camps have conversely been suffused with the materialities, policing practices, and notions of exception that govern military occupations. Kakuma camp is hereby an exemplary theatre in which these spatial tensions and violent complicities materialise.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Refugees in Uniform: Community Policing as a Technology of Government in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

ABSTRACT:

Community policing has been a popular paradigm for locally organising anti-crime activities in Africa since the 1990s and spread rapidly across the continent. Meanwhile, humanitarian organisations have increasingly adopted versions of the framework for administering refugee camps and to foster security, protection and the peaceful coexistence of residents. This article focuses on community policing as a contested technology of government in the Kakuma camp in north-western Kenya, where humanitarian agencies and the Kenyan authorities vie for influence in determining the orientation, organisation and purpose of the programme at a time when the government tends towards securitisation of refugees and expanding counter-terrorism. Therefore, Kakuma's Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs) operate between a liberal humanitarian as well as a more illiberal technology of government linked to state patronage and their uniforms, pedagogies, and rationalities reflect this governmental negotiation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, attempts at scripting refugee conducts are constantly mediated by the plurivalent networks and practices which are indicative of the camp's counter-organisation in a 'deep community'. Based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, the article demonstrates that governing refugees through community policing ultimately blurs the lines between humanitarian protection, decentralised state governance and the domestication of ostensibly uncontrollable social forces.

Keywords: community policing; governmentality; camp; protection; humanitarianism; state patronage; deep community; refugees; Kakuma; Kenya;

Introduction

'Don't think a policeman is God. We need informants like you to know what's going on.'¹⁰⁵

On Friday afternoon, 22 July 2016, a community policing patrol sets off from the security office in the South Sudanese-dominated 'Equatoria Community' of Kakuma refugee camp in Turkana county, north-western Kenya. Refugees patrolling today are wearing reflector vests which bear the acronym 'CPPT': Community Peace and Protection Teams, a community policing initiative funded by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and managed by the faith-based Lutheran World Federation

¹⁰⁵ Police officer training refugees in community policing, Kakuma, 27.09.2016.

(LWF). Though officially unarmed, some CPPTs wield crude batons or metal pipes, one swings an archaic-looking club with nails protruding at the end. Lucy, a 42-year-old South Sudanese woman, supervises an eclectic group of Acholi, Lopit, Didinga, Lotuko, Dinka, Nuer, Tannet and Somali refugees who are dressed in light blue uniforms and comb through this camp neighbourhood in search of drug-users, thieves and ‘suspicious characters’¹⁰⁶. Wherever the gaze of humanitarian agencies cannot reach, they hire refugee staff as their ‘eyes and ears’ in a camp that stretches over sixteen square kilometres and houses more than 148,000 people. CPPTs are meant to report incidents, control crowds during football matches and food distribution but also settle low-level disputes between camp residents. By September 2016, LWF reported to have enlisted some 330 refugees into the programme (Brankamp 2016).

For some years now, Kenya’s government has additionally staked claims on the CPPTs as serviceable proxies to aid its counter-terrorism operations in the camp. The state’s interest in the refugee scheme coincided with the country-wide rolling out of *Nyumba Kumi*, a community policing plan designed to responsabilise Kenyan citizens to locally combat crime and terrorism through increased surveillance and information-gathering. These diverging agendas highlight contestations over community as an ‘arena of intervention’ (Li 2007) in the camp, where multi-national, multi-ethnic, and culturally diverse populations of noncitizens live under the joint stewardship of UNHCR and the Kenyan government. Refugee camps are commonly home to a multiplicity of formal and informal institutions, social logics and sovereignties (Ramadan 2012).

¹⁰⁶ The phrase ‘suspicious characters’ is often used during LWF and police trainings for CPPTs.

Perhaps because of this heterogeneity, camps additionally abound with educational and social programmes which target refugees as objects of reform, rehabilitation and governance (Jaji 2012). This presupposes particular constructions of ‘community’ which help to maintain and manage refugee populations in exile (Bulley 2014, 64). As a contribution to debates on the administration of humanitarian camps and local security governance in Africa more broadly, this article examines the strategies of responsabilisation and mobilisation which have evinced community policing as a technology of government in Kenya’s Kakuma camp. This involves the enrolment of refugees by means of particular pedagogies, rationalities and actions into conforming to certain institutional conducts, something Foucault described as ‘governmentality’ (Foucault 1991). In contrast to liberal narratives suggesting that refugees are hereby encouraged to self-govern, I argue that community policing in Kakuma camp blurs the lines between a liberal humanitarian and an illiberal technology of government emerging from state patronage¹⁰⁷. On the one hand, the UNHCR and LWF frame the CPPTs as empowering refugees to foster harmony, peaceful coexistence, to monitor crime and safeguard public order in the camp¹⁰⁸. The Kenyan authorities on the other use the programme to cement more illiberal forms of decentralised state governance and see it primarily as a means to shield themselves and their citizens from the terrorist threats they suspect to emanate from the refugee population. While humanitarians and the Kenyan state display instrumentalised understandings of how Kakuma’s ‘refugee community’ could be mobilised for self-policing, refugees and their particularist networks are constantly limiting and unworking these governmental interventions through everyday forms of

¹⁰⁷ ‘State patronage’ here denotes a mode of security governance which particularly authoritarian regimes use to decentralise state power.

¹⁰⁸ CPPT Manual, undated.

counter-organisation, manipulation and defiance that are indicative of a loosely structured ‘deep community’ in the camp. Community policing in Kakuma is hence paradoxically an attempt at localising humanitarian protection, utilising refugees to reinforce their own securitisation as well as the domestication of ostensibly uncontrollable social forces.

The article is based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Kakuma between 2016 and 2017. During this period, I was hosted by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that gave me permission to take part in the everyday activities of the CPPTs but otherwise did not restrict my study. Approval for accessing the camp was obtained from Kenya’s Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS), local police, and the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC) of Turkana-West. The ensuing analysis draws on 110 recorded interviews with CPPTs, humanitarian staff, police officers, government officials, refugees, as well as on copious field notes taken during and after informal conversations, observations and daily interactions. I conducted the interviews without interpreters either in Kiswahili or English, depending on the preferences of interlocutors, while several unrecorded conversations took place in Arabic. As a white, male European researcher I was often perceived as somewhat aligned with humanitarian agencies and therefore had to strike a balance between staying close enough to those organisations and the Kenyan authorities for privileged access without compromising my role as an ‘independent’ figure in the eyes of many refugees. For reasons of confidentiality, names of respondents have been pseudonymised.

The first section makes a conceptual point about community policing as a technology of government with different manifestations and its proliferation across the African continent. Second, I provide some context for community policing as an

ambiguous project of surveillance and citizen security in Kenya up until the contemporary *Nyumba Kumi* initiative. Third, I focus on the relationship between governance and ‘community’ in Kakuma and trace the development of community policing in the camp. This includes a discussion of the varying governmentalities at play in the CPPT programme and their permanent negotiation through alternative forms of social organisation in the camp. Finally, I conclude that in spite of these limitations, community policing is a potent technology of government which is sometimes deployed towards opposing ends and aspires to ensure the protection and safety of refugees while effectively facilitating their management and exclusion.



Figure 20: CPPTs on patrol in the Tarach dry riverbed, Kakuma 1 (source: author).

Community policing as a technology of government

Since the 1990s, community policing has been a popular paradigm for locally organising anti-crime activities in Africa and has spread rapidly across the continent. Although not a uniform concept, it subsumes a set of strategies, tactics and initiatives ‘imported’ from Anglo-American contexts to improve police-public relations and foster accountability in the spirit of ‘democratic policing’, especially in societies deemed ‘fragile’ and ‘conflict-ridden’ (Brogden and Nijhar 2005; Steinberg 2011). Neoliberal policies of privatisation have augmented this development by promoting the substitution of public services with the increased reliance on citizens as quasi surrogates of the state, especially in security and policing (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010). Scholars accordingly shifted their focus towards local contests over authority and an irreducible plurality of order-making and ‘everyday policing’ (Buur and Jensen 2004; Lund 2006). While Baker argued that non-state policing of this kind has always existed in societies across the continent (Baker 2008), its resurgence through development policies created new opportunities for many African governments to reclaim state sovereignty at the margins while relinquishing partial responsibilities and financial burdens to the civil society and private security markets (Sen and Pratten 2007). Many post-socialist African regimes regarded comparable initiatives as a chance for nation-building and as a way of extending the reach of the state (Cross 2014; Kyed 2009). Tanzania introduced community policing in 2006 to enhance the legitimacy of regular police and enlist citizens for ‘national development’ (Cross 2014). Similar attempts to enrol local communities in the service of the state or ruling party exist throughout the region in Ethiopia (Di Nunzio 2014), Rwanda (Baker 2007), Mozambique (Kyed 2009) and Uganda (Tapscott 2016). Even in South Africa, Fourchard has characterised community policing and popular forms of vigilantism

as ‘two sides of the same mobilization process for security’ (Fourchard 2011, 19). Likewise, rather than focusing on community policing as an ontological form of everyday sovereignty, this article examines the strategic mobilisations of the CPPTs as institutional intermediaries deployed to police the ‘refugee community’ in Kakuma camp.

Community policing programmes often invoke a rhetorical desire to affirm human links between bureaucratic agencies of collective security and local residents, as well as to mend rifts among ‘fragmented’ populations (Stenson 1993, 373). The ‘community’ is thereby not only claimed by local social networks as a locus of resistance but has itself increasingly become an instrumentalised terrain of intervention, management and policing (Rose 1996, 332). Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’ is useful in this regard as it is attentive to the micropolitical practices agencies use to regulate the everyday conduct of populations to govern themselves and others (Foucault 1991). Firstly, this entails a recognition that power is not limited to the authority of the state but shared between often competing governing agencies, and secondly it emphasises the ways in which populations are identified, conditioned and controlled through specific analyses, vocabularies, calculations or procedures (Foucault 1991, 102; McConnell 2012). This seems especially resonant in the context of the camp where, in light of shrinking humanitarian budgets, refugees are managed at low cost and are exposed to a constant flurry of trainings or workshops that aim to influence popular conducts into relieving institutional responsibilities for safety and security. Rose insists that despite the impact of existing allegiances and cultural networks, this ‘government through community’ nonetheless ‘transforms them, invests them with new values, affiliates them to expertise and re-configures relations of exclusion’ (Rose 1996, 332).

Therefore, community policing in many African societies is at the same time a corollary of neoliberal policies, infused with prevailing socio-cultural logics, but also forms 'part of state repressive arsenals' (Sen and Pratten 2007, 3). It is this ambiguous interplay between Western-sponsored programmes, that seek to improve public security through local anti-crime control and to reconfigure policing as a collective duty of 'good citizens', and the re-inscription of centralised state power through indirect rule, that is often the hallmark of community policing (Brogden and Nijhar 2005). In this article, I thus distinguish analytically between liberal and illiberal technologies of government that mobilise refugees in Kakuma for community policing, although in practice this differentiation may be all but clear-cut. While community policing as a liberal governmental technology hinges on limitations of force and theoretically the democratic self-regulation of refugees in Kakuma camp, its illiberal inclinations under the patronage of the centralised Kenyan state produce modes of rule which privilege discipline and sovereign authority. Opitz argues that even liberal governmentality can slip into more illiberal modes of power, in particular when the frequently incontestable logic of 'security' is invoked vis-a-vis a 'dangerous subject' (Opitz 2010). Especially in postcolonial African states, where governance has often not been characterised by restrictions on power but through excess (Mbembe 2001), this slippage may indeed be even more pronounced. In practice, however, community policing in Kakuma is neither unlimited in scope nor success but produces 'hybrid arrangements and practices in which different mentalities of governance [and] institutional arrangements coexist' (Wood and Shearing 2007, 21).

Community policing in Kenya: citizens and surveillance

‘[...] it is incumbent upon citizens to participate in matters of their security not only as part of their civic duty but also in the spirit of patriotism to their country’¹⁰⁹

Community policing is an inescapable trope in Kenya’s discourse on public security. Since the military invasion of Somalia in 2011, the country has seen a sharp rise in attacks by the Somali *Al-Shabaab* militants (Anderson and McKnight 2015), notably on Nairobi’s Westgate Mall in 2014 and the Garissa University College in 2015. Media coverage and bellicose government posturing have since contributed to public fears of terrorism smoothly merging with existing anxieties surrounding urban crime and disorder (Glück 2017, 310). In his Mashujaa Day¹¹⁰ speech on 20 October 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta reminded citizens sternly that,

The first rule of security is vigilance: we must know everything and everyone around us. It will be a great betrayal for anyone of us to pretend oblivion while next door, someone is assembling bombs, hoarding illegal weapons, or detaining a kidnapped child. That is why we must all embrace the ‘Nyumba Kumi’ plan: ensure that you know at least 10 households around your residence well (Standard 2013).

Prescribing neighbourly surveillance to fight terrorism indicated a diffusion of responsibilities for security across Kenyan society, in which ‘the many’ were expected to watch ‘the few’. This proxy governance has been a feature of Kenya’s political landscape for much longer. One senior official of the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) remarked that ‘community policing has had so many forms and faces that we aren’t really sure anymore where the head and [where] the tail is’¹¹¹. Under President Moi’s authoritarian regime, ‘security committees’ served

¹⁰⁹ GoK, “Draft Guidelines”.

¹¹⁰ Until 2010, *Mashujaa Day* was officially known as *Kenyatta Day*, commemorating Kenya’s first President Jomo Kenyatta.

¹¹¹ IPOA official, 15.08.2017.

as thinly-veiled vehicles for local intelligence-gathering among citizens¹¹². As multiparty politics dawned in the 1990s, the committees became part of the government's strategy to retain power under the aegis of provincial administrations. When Ruteere and Pommerolle conducted their study on community policing in Nairobi, they concluded that 'it may require a whole new political culture for community policing, in its democratic sense, to stand a chance' (Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003, 604).

President Mwa Kibaki promised a more participatory approach in his new government and launched a National Community Policing Policy in April 2005 (Muiruri 2005). Civil society stakeholders like PeaceNet¹¹³, Saferworld (Saferworld 2008), and Crisis Response Development Foundation (CRDF) (Skilling 2016) sought to establish citizen-centred policing projects. However, this initial euphoria was short-lived as the police and political elites remained ill-disposed towards any reform (Ruteere 2011, 14) and the government's sway over the security committees proved difficult to curtail. According to a senior community policing chairman in Kibera, this created awkward situations when 'there were two chairmen, one was recognised by civil society and one by the government'¹¹⁴. In the aftermath of the 2007/08 post-election violence, community policing was yet again proposed (GoK 2013) to deliver change in the security sector, despite its hitherto rather ambiguous record. Kenyan lawmakers passed a set of laws to guide the agreed police reform process, including a National Police Service Act (GoK 2011) which stipulated the creation of consultative citizen-police forums across the country. However, with the reforms not yet implemented, Uhuru Kenyatta's election to the presidency in 2013 heralded more

¹¹² Kibera community policing chairman, 14.07.2017.

¹¹³ Members of PeaceNet were interviewed on 12.07.2017.

¹¹⁴ Interview, 14.07.2017.

policy changes through the introduction of *Nyumba Kumi* – a system whereby households form an administrative cluster and elect a neighbourhood security chairman (Kioko 2017).

On November 8, 2013, President Kenyatta appointed a task force for the implementation of *Nyumba Kumi*¹¹⁵. In the name of patriotism, the programme sought to conscript citizens into country-wide surveillance. Illustrating this sentiment superbly was a government video released in 2014 with the slogan *Ulinzi unaanza na mimi, Ulinzi unaanza na wewe* (Vigilance starts with me, Vigilance starts with you)¹¹⁶ in which the president advises ‘terrorists, criminals and thugs’ to ‘run and hide, because there will be thousands of cameras and millions of pairs of eyes watching you’ (GoK 2014). Though *Nyumba Kumi* faced tremendous challenges because of scarce funding and low levels of training (Mogire, Mkutu, and Alusa 2018, 93), its governmental value lay arguably rather in reinforcing ‘security as an imagined community’ in Kenya (Glück 2017, 311). Refugees and ethnic minorities, portrayed as potential saboteurs and terrorists outside this community, were discursively constructed as an adversarial ‘suspect community’ (Hillyard 1993). Police operations that targeted Somalis and other refugees in Nairobi’s Eastleigh estate (Balakian 2016; HRW 2013) in 2014, as well as the government’s consecutive threats to close Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps in 2015 and 2016 (GoK 2016), reinforced the securitisation of refugees and asylum-seekers¹¹⁷. *Nyumba Kumi* emerged as a strategy to nurture cultures of denunciation and obligate Kenyans to eye those with suspicion who were seen as a fifth column in their midst, in particular refugees and noncitizens.

¹¹⁵ *Nyumba Kumi* literally means ‘ten houses’ and draws on Tanzania’s model of local governance.

¹¹⁶ The Swahili word ‘ulinzi’ also translates to ‘surveillance’ or ‘protection’.

¹¹⁷ UNHCR Head of Protection, Nairobi, 03.03.2017



Figure 21: CPPT office in the 'Equatoria' community, Kakuma 1 (source: author).

Governing through community in Kakuma refugee camp

Kakuma refugee camp was established in 1992 after scores of refugees fleeing Sudan's civil war arrived in Turkana district (today county) near the Kenyan-Sudanese border. International organisations including UNHCR and LWF began to provide basic services for a population of initially 12,000 (Jansen 2011, 8). As conflicts in the region continued, the camp absorbed more refugees from Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, DR Congo, Burundi, and Eritrea. In 2000, Kakuma camp had become home to a diverse population of 70,000 refugees who UNHCR administered at first by categorising them into ethnic and national 'communities'. Communities were allocated plots of land on which they could settle, determining the contours of evolving camp neighbourhoods. They possessed their own political

administrations, councils of elders, prison cells, and ‘bench courts’ for administering justice locally (Crisp 2000; Griek 2006). Likely for lack of alternatives, humanitarian agencies celebrated rather than penalised this regulatory plurality until the early 2000s when the UNHCR and Kenya’s government abolished alternative court authorities from presiding over criminal proceedings in the camp, citing a concern for human rights and national laws¹¹⁸. Nonetheless, even following this ban many customary authorities in Kakuma continued to wield considerable power. At least until the early 2000s, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in particular had enormous political influence on the social organisation of the camp (Jansen 2011, 90–93).

Then in 2011, Kakuma was divided into new constituencies of ‘blocks’ and ‘zones’ to replace the previous communities and introduce a supposedly more democratic, multi-ethnic governance system in the camp. UNHCR pressed for refugee leadership to shift from ‘councils of elders’ to newly-elected block and zonal leaders who were considered more ‘inclusive’ and attuned to the workings of humanitarian institutions¹¹⁹. This followed a long-standing trajectory through which UNHCR aimed to transform the social behaviours of refugees through training in democratic governance and peace-building in a Peace Education Program (PEP). Sagy notes that this was rooted in an implicit belief that the conflicts in refugees’ countries of origin were not simply political but arose from sociocultural attitudes and behaviours which were anathema to achieving lasting peace (Sagy 2008, 366). Peace education thus became a key humanitarian pedagogy in the camp that valued harmony over justice and was deployed as ‘a form of pacification’ (Sagy 2008, 361).

¹¹⁸ UNHCR official, Kakuma, 21.07.2017.

¹¹⁹ UNHCR document: Kakuma Camp Leadership Structure, 18.08.2014.

At the same time, it constituted a governmental controlling process that tried to ‘transform collectivist attitudes [and] wishes to replace community enforcement with self enforcement’ (Sagy 2008, 372). Until today, peace-building forms part of LWF’s repertoire of measures to support peace and security in the camp and the organisation employs refugee social workers and convenes peace committees¹²⁰. Later in 2011, in order to delegitimise any unauthorised community, UNHCR and LWF drafted a ‘camp constitution’ which was ratified by refugee leaders who had previously been appointed through the new electoral system¹²¹. Meanwhile, even policing and security came increasingly under the influence of humanitarian-sponsored ideologies of peace that also aimed to transform community policing.

Community policing: from ‘refugee guards’ to ‘Community Peace and Protection Teams’

Only some years after Kakuma was established, LWF launched a community safety programme under the name ‘refugee guards’ to tackle insecurity and crime in the refugee camp. Selomon, an Ethiopian refugee, remembers that in 1997 ‘two uniformed refugee guards were allocated to the Ethiopians, Somalis, Ugandans, Nuer, Dinka and Equatorians, respectively’¹²² to maintain public order. A formal police presence was sparse at the time, and humanitarian organisations needed refugees to help with the everyday management of crowds at distributions, head counts, public events and the coordination of crime reporting. Unsurprisingly, the reputation of refugee guards was rather mixed, as they ‘often received inadequate training, and some of them were known to beat up other refugees with impunity’ (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005, 141).

¹²⁰ Interview, Head of LWF Peace-building, Kakuma, 19.01.2017.

¹²¹ UNHCR document: Kakuma Refugee Camp Community: Constitution and Rules, November 2011.

¹²² Interview, 24.02.2017.

Local Kenyans were hired to supervise a small number of refugee guards, who by then had become a more or less intrinsic part of the camp's 'community administrations.' Until 2005, LWF's Kenyan security staff outnumbered their refugee supervisees, and it was them – not the refugee guards – who routinely conducted nightly patrols in the camp together with the Kenyan police reservists¹²³, an armed auxiliary force typically operating at Kenya's rural peripheries (Mkutu and Wandera 2013). Regular police officers always had ambiguous and at times strained relationships with refugee guards which were typically filtered through friendships, personal networks, ethnicity, and the dispensation of *kitu kidogo* (colloquial Kiswahili for a bribe). The comments made by a senior Kenyan police officer who served in Kakuma for several years reveal the complexity of their daily interactions and nascent professional rivalries.

They were *actually* assisting, the refugees were *actually* assisting, like in relaying information, but it reached a time when they wanted to take over the duties of the *real police* – our duties. If they arrest someone, they wanted to assume authority. So that became a form of extortion. But actually, they were giving us support and information¹²⁴.

This statement reflects the ambiguity of the police about what role CPPTs should play and how they fit in with the police as prime representatives of the Kenyan state's sovereign power in the camp. The officer's differentiation between refugee guards and the *real police* is an instructive detail and is cognizant of a perceived fear that humanitarian organisations are fostering actual refugee self-reliance in security matters. As the camp economy grew, the potential for business feuds and competition increased and drove up crime rates. While official statistics are contested and difficult to attain, a number of NGO staff and refugees explained that the years from 2006

¹²³ Kenyan LWF Security officer, 26.11.2016.

¹²⁴ Senior police officer, 14.01.2017, Nairobi.

onwards saw a hike in reported theft, murder and rape cases in Kakuma that prompted LWF to increase their refugee guard recruits¹²⁵.

Meanwhile, Kakuma's refugee guard model was replicated in the management of the Dadaab camps in North-eastern Kenya. There, however, they faced more animosity from other refugees and soon several members were killed, injured or simply resigned¹²⁶. This in turn had implications for community policing in Kakuma as well because LWF felt compelled to ensure the legitimacy of community policing among general camp populations in both camps. LWF's country director explains that the renaming of and concomitant attempt at professionalising the refugee guards as Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs) was believed to remedy immediate security concerns¹²⁷, although there was little to suggest that it had substantive effects of their perception among other refugees.

CPPTs as a liberal technology of humanitarian government

As community policing gained popularity as a palliative policy for crime prevention in Africa, UNHCR and its partner organisations introduced similar programmes in camps across Eastern Africa (Crisp 2001; Brankamp 2016; Veroff 2010) to ground humanitarian protection directly 'within communities' (UNHCR 2013). Bulley has detailed how refugee camps have come to be managed in line with the liberal rationalities of government which prevail in industrialised societies and that stress economic efficiency, responsabilisation of individuals and self-regulation (Bulley 2014, 64). In Kakuma, humanitarian actors devised of ways to govern refugees at a

¹²⁵ Senior CPPA, 26.11.2016.

¹²⁶ CPPT, Hagadera, Dadaab, 12.04.2017.

¹²⁷ Director of LWF Djibouti-Kenya Programme in Nairobi, 03.04.2017.

distance early on and policing was perceived as one of several terrains on which UNHCR and LWF could ‘tap into’ existing competencies of refugees to maintain public order. In a 2001 programmatic paper, UNHCR contended that ‘refugee communities harbour a wealth of social and cultural traditions of religious practices, neighbourhood associations, work experiences and political experience’ (UNHCR 2001). In contrast to Sagy, however, who suggested that such ideologies of peace simply transferred the responsibility from the level of community to refugee individuals who seemed easier to control (Sagy 2008), organisations in Kakuma simultaneously turned to constructing a different kind of community which would be more conducive to the humanitarian technologies of assessment, control and evaluation. This supports Bulley’s point that camps are spatial security technologies in which the notion of ‘community’ is deployed as a tactic to both fixate refugee identities in the administrative space of the camp while also reinforcing control over them by using statistics, categories and calculations of aid (Bulley 2014, 68–70).

While community policing in the rest of Kenya promoted the idea of citizens setting the agenda in local security governance (Skilling 2016; Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003), in Kakuma this role fell on refugees working as CPPTs under the supervision of LWF and, by extension, UNHCR. In a 2013 strategy paper UNHCR argues that ‘working through community mechanisms enhances protection, and enhanced protection strengthens communities’ (UNHCR 2013, 7). This circular logic also found application in Kakuma’s CPPTs, who were responsibilised into assuming pseudo-managerial roles that would eventually consolidate the refugee community not as an autonomous form of social organisation but rather as what Foucault called a ‘mechanism of security’ (Bulley 2014, 68). Community policing in the camp therefore relied increasingly on deploying a strategic myth of community that could

legitimise continuing humanitarian guardianship over the encamped refugee population. While this ‘community’ was formally represented as the prime object of policing in Kakuma, it had little empirical grounding or cohesion beyond the common residency of refugees in the camp. Crucially, while the CPPTs were effectively simulating self-regulation and community-based protection, this was only seen as desirable as long as it occurred within the ‘field of action’ (Foucault 1982) delimited by the humanitarian agencies. In a sense, keeping community policing under tight supervision essentially produced refugee subjectivities without real responsibility or autonomy. At a training in November 2016, LWF’s senior programme manager in Kakuma told CPPTs that,

Sometimes people don’t appreciate the work you do or realise that cases are being solved because of your work or the information you have provided. I want to emphasise that because of you, people see LWF as a big army that is present in every corner of the camp.

The claim that CPPTs embody a ‘big army’ in the service of humanitarianism is indicative of the self-image that LWF and UNHCR have cultivated and which positions CPPTs as *their* ‘eyes and ears’. As much as community policing used the rhetoric of local protection it was equally a symptom of a more ambivalent relation of power inherent to humanitarianism that promotes safety while imposing a particular restrictive vision of order (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). Thus, CPPT uniforms of light blue shirts and dark blue trousers were material reminders of a governmental intervention that turned everyday self-presentation into a bone of contention. At least since Foucault, the uniform has been recognised as one of the paradigmatic items through which governmentality is enacted on the body (Foucault 1995, 181). Kenyan supervisors routinely reprimanded the unwillingness of CPPTs

to wear their uniforms at work, typically leading to a perfectly choreographed performance of negotiation over authority and the banal politics of dress. The uniforms themselves suggested a symbolic cross-fertilisation as they emulate the olive-green Kenyan police uniforms with their decorative aiguillette. Police-style shoulder marks, that distinguish between different ranks in the CPPTs, were introduced to incentivise promotions and instil a sense of discipline, professionalism and loyalty to LWF and its humanitarian mission¹²⁸. Maryam, a young Somali CPPT explained,

Maybe you arrive at work late and a Kenyan tells you ‘why have you done that? Don’t you know that’s wrong? You think we are here to laugh or entertain you, do you know where your salary comes from?’. You hear others telling you ‘why are you not wearing uniform, or you think this uniform was not bought?’, but you fail to understand. You cannot spend the whole week in uniform, the uniform is supposed to be washed, but you are simply told ‘wash it in the evening and wear it in the morning!’¹²⁹.

Kenyan supervisors (CPPAs) were thereby key for the implementation of community policing in Kakuma, officially to ensure the compliance with human rights and humanitarian principles but more importantly to bring people ‘in line’, though usually with limited success. Each CPPA is responsible for overseeing a CPPT office in a particular zone of the camp, which itself is headed by a refugee supervisor. This doubling of responsibility was interpreted by many CPPTs as a lack of trust in their work and contributed to their sense of frustration with paternalistic control. Kenyan CPPAs were sometimes, whether rightly or wrongly, alleged to simply arrive at the office in the morning, take attendance and thereafter exit the camp, thus leaving refugee staff to do most of the work. During an LWF meeting, a South Sudanese

¹²⁸ LWF senior supervisor, 02.03.2015.

¹²⁹ CPPT, 26.01.2017

CPPT hence lamented, 'if there is misconduct on the part of the LWF office we should also be able to blame the Kenyan national staff [CPPAs], not always us refugees. We report to you, but Kenyans are required to take action, too'. Complaints like this reached the agency frequently and were symptomatic of the hierarchies inscribed in the professional relationship between refugees and Kenyan CPPAs. Even though a stated goal of community policing in Kakuma was to foster 'local ownership' of protection work by refugees, the privileging of Kenyan national workers and the reinforcement of a unidirectional accountability to the humanitarian establishment sometimes put this logic in doubt.

In 2015, humanitarian organisations channelled 52 million Kenya shillings (\$500,000) annually into community policing in Kakuma¹³⁰. The recruitment of CPPTs as employees on the payroll of LWF was thereby a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the average salary of 3800 Kenya shillings [\$38] a month provided a meagre yet welcome livelihood in addition to the food rations from aid organisations. On the other, the transactional nature of this employment contravened the professed embeddedness of CPPTs in 'the community' and produced frictions over payments and duties, not least because the Kenyan CPPAs earned on average no less than seven times more than refugees. Indeed, it is ironic perhaps that LWF and UNHCR themselves have thus cultivated a kind of ownership from above over CPPTs that entitled them not only to information from within 'the community' but ultimately demands loyalty from refugee staff to humanitarian principles and agency structures. During a meeting, a Kenyan supervisor appealed to all CPPTs to honour this established chain of command, emphasising that 'you have to report to LWF. The

¹³⁰ Communication with Head of LWF, 07.10.2015. The budget for community policing consists of contributions from UNHCR (77%), Church of Sweden (12%) and DanChurchAid (11%).

OCS [Officer Commanding the Police Station] is not your boss. We are not employed by the government, we work under LWF. If the case is serious, we call the police for reinforcement, that's it'¹³¹. This left CPPTs in a somewhat schizophrenic position of having to simultaneously feign deference to their humanitarian employers, profess their commitment to a relatively vague notion of peace, and perform an institutionalised form of community that is concerned with the administrative needs of aid agencies rather than the protection of refugees.

CPPTs as an illiberal technology of state patronage

Although community policing in Kakuma was fully financed and administered by humanitarian organisations, it inevitably hinged on a workable relationship with Kenyan authorities. As early as 2014, Kenya's Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) assumed direct control over CPPTs in the Dadaab camps and LWF officials sensed that it was but a matter of time until the programme in Kakuma would follow suit¹³². If the government's country-wide promotion of *Nyumba Kumi* in light of counter-terrorism campaigns was any indication, the refugee camps constituted key sites where the security of Kenya could potentially be at risk.

However, while *Nyumba Kumi* pits Kenyan citizens against supposed external threats – especially from a 'suspect community' of refugees and asylum-seekers – community policing in the camp was utilising the refugee population itself to protect the Kenyan state from potential harm. Due to unsubstantiated government reports that claimed the Westgate and Garissa attacks were planned in the Kakuma and Dadaab camps, respectively (Mutambo 2015; Straziuso and Odula 2013), the regime

¹³¹ Kenyan CPPT supervisor, 03.11.2016.

¹³² Interviews in Nairobi, 03.04.2017 and in Kakuma, 03.08.2017.

infiltrated the camps with refugee informants¹³³. This bore unequivocal semblance to the counter-terrorism 'Prevent' initiative the British government launched in 2006 and which expected Muslim communities to self-police and conduct informal surveillance among friends, neighbours and colleagues (Spalek and Lambert 2007). Likewise, a number of CPPTs in Kakuma were persuaded and even pressurised into becoming informants and collaborators for the Kenyan government which regarded them with collective suspicion. In order to rationalise this strategy, the authorities evoked a distinction between 'real refugees' and 'bad refugees'¹³⁴, effectively producing again an imagined security community that revolved around the former and excluded the latter (Hillyard 1993). Thus, a security officer from Kenya's refugee affairs agency addressed a group of CPPTs and asserted that:

We know you have fled your countries for many reasons, and that your governments may send people to track you down even here. So, if you see someone who you suspect of being a foreign spy, hitman or terrorist, please let us know. Not all refugees *are* refugees.¹³⁵

However, policing the camp through enrolling 'trusted' CPPTs into surveillance work was not always based on appeals to their commitment to human rights, liberal democracy and peace but was crucially a more illiberal technology of control. Pierre, a Congolese CPPT, recalls a Kenyan intelligence officer addressing an LWF meeting in 2015 with particular focus on what he called 'the Somali question'. In a commanding tone, the Kenyan agent instructed CPPTs to provide any information they may harbour on fellow refugees, especially (but not exclusively) Somalis, who

¹³³ Intelligence officer, 14.12.2016.

¹³⁴ The notion of 'real refugees' was constantly evoked by government officials and police officers when talking about camp security.

¹³⁵ RAS officer, 08.08.2016.

they considered suspicious or even ‘extremist’. Emphasising the personal choices CPPTs would henceforth face, the Kenyan officer spelled out the grave consequences if intelligence was not forthcoming: ‘We will come back, arrest the CPPTs who refused to give us information, close the camp and deport all of you immediately!’¹³⁶. And indeed, this was no empty threat as only a few weeks later, the notorious Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) arrested two Somali CPPTs in Kakuma on ‘suspicions of supporting *Al-Shabaab*’. The suspects were abducted from their homes at night and transported to Nairobi where they were held in jail and charged in the Milimani High Court until their charges were eventually dropped and the suspects were allowed to return to Kakuma¹³⁷. Many CPPTs in Kakuma were forced into an impossible in-between position that put them in permanent fear of ‘double stigmatisation’ (Spalek and Lambert 2007, 13) – being seen as ‘suspects’ by both the Kenyan population and state or as tainted ‘government spies’ from within the camp.

Importantly, community policing in Kakuma contradicts Bulley’s notion that camps are being primarily managed through a liberal rationality which conditions refugee conducts into achieving the humanitarian objectives of optimising and protecting vulnerable lives (Bulley 2014). Indeed, Kenyan authorities used the securitisation of refugees as potential enemies of the state to expand their sovereign influence over the camp’s policing operations. The liberal governmental vision of community policing as a vehicle for democratic governance and peace-building was thereby overturned through the permanent possibility of illiberal intervention, direct commands, threats of violence, and even the expulsion of refugees from Kenya. Opitz notes that while subjects of liberal control are understood to be able to make

¹³⁶ CPPT, 01.03.2017

¹³⁷ CPPT, 16.05.2017.

rational decisions and to comply with desirable conduct, 'dangerous subjects' are usually not afforded the same freedoms but are instead placed in a more direct governmental relation (Opitz 2010, 110). Kakuma's uniformed refugees were thus increasingly deployed as proxies at the behest of Kenyan police to arrest their fellow refugees or even extort money on behalf of police officers. For the Kenyan government, CPPTs were thus not so much an initiative to cultivate horizontal cohesion and mutual protection among refugees but a vehicle to reinforce their vertical dependencies on representatives of the state.

In order to cleanse the ranks of CPPTs from what were considered 'disloyal elements', the Kenyan refugee affairs agency decided to launch a vetting exercise for refugees involved in community policing in the camp in 2017¹³⁸. Many refugees feared that vetting for 'suitability' was nothing more but an attempt to handpick those individuals who were most compliant with the government's interests and commands. Interestingly, humanitarians working at the UNHCR and LWF seemed more worried about their own waning influence over security governance in the camp than the imminent erosion of refugee protection through expanding state patronage. A senior LWF administrator in Kakuma hence warned that Kenya's government 'is now setting the stage for fully absorbing the CPPTs'¹³⁹.

Deep community: negotiating governmentalities through counter-conducts

While community policing is usually linked to specific governmental visions and programmes, there are naturally always 'practices that form in, around, through or against the plan' (Li 2007, 279). These practices are usually intrinsically pluralistic,

¹³⁸ Government official, Kakuma, 24.02.2017.

¹³⁹ Interview, 03.08.2017.

incongruous and follow multiple logics. Whereas both UNHCR and LWF subscribe to a particular ‘myth’ of community most serviceable to their administrative needs, and the Kenyan authorities resort to the spectre of refugees as a ‘suspect community’, a less instrumentalised account unveils forms of permanent counter-organisation in what may be considered a ‘deep community’. In Kakuma, this loosely structured community comprises a mosaic of customary regulators, religious authorities, businesspeople or alternative ‘liminal experts’ (Turner 1999, 13) who are the authors of often uncoordinated counter-conducts and practices which manipulate and divert community policing from its institutionally-intended path. This confirms McConnachie’s point that there is not one but ‘multiple overlapping communities’ (McConnachie 2014, 41) that people refugee camps. Kakuma’s ‘deep community’ is thus a multifaceted site of counter-conducts where idealised constructions of the refugee community are turned inside out and give way to the whims and cadences of a more uncontainable expression of community (Bulley 2014, 72).

Few CPPTs embody this concurrence of different forms of social association in Kakuma like Tom. In addition to his role as a respected Nuer elder, he is also a CPPT supervisor and an evangelist pastor in his local church. Going on patrol with him means getting a sense of how inseparable his simultaneous social roles actually are. Depending on who we encounter, people amiably address Tom either as ‘commander’ or ‘pastor’, while yet others prefer to call him by his Nuer name. Even though LWF formally obligates CPPTs to ensure that community policing is a locally-grounded form of peace-making in the camp, the agency also set limits of what kind of justice and policing is institutionally acceptable. Despite the official ban on Kakuma’s ‘bench courts’ and multiple attempts to diminish the influence of the ‘councils of elders’, CPPTs had gradually assumed some of the same responsibilities,

jurisdictions and developed an overlap in their membership. Tom explains in this regard:

The cooperation between CPPTs and the Nuer council of elders is very close. If we get a case that belongs to the elders, like adultery, which is not punishable by law in Kenya, we call upon customary law and hand the suspects over to the elders. If a person does not want to listen to us in the [CPPT] office, we work together with the elders and the parents and ask them ‘come and see the way your child has behaved in the office here, is this the way you should behave?’ If the accused still does not understand, we can also take them to the police, so that they [suspect] will eventually come back [to the community] as a normal person.

While CPPTs may officially refer non-criminal cases under Kenyan law to councils of elders, the latter sometimes claimed responsibility beyond this. Indeed, considering the vast knowledge on everyday policing in African societies, it is perhaps unsurprising that existing social ordering practices mediated externally introduced governmental programmes in Kakuma. Dressed in his official CPPT uniform, Riek explained why ‘bench courts’ should continue to administer justice in ‘serious’ criminal cases, including rape, rather than being handled through formal channels that include humanitarian-funded community policing:

Maybe a girl has been impregnated or raped. After arrests are made they [elders] sit down and hear the case, because whenever we would forward those cases to the police nothing would be solved. So, the bench court is there to reduce hatred between communities, to ensure dialogue and compensation. Whenever people were arrested they would sit down, agree and compensate one another.

The way Riek and Tom navigated their respective in-between positions as CPPTs and members of their local communities illustrates the kind of acumen and social skills they have developed. Their particularist networks often unsettled the procedural, non-partisan manner in which LWF and UNHCR prescribe community

policing to be conducted. This became especially clear when I spent some time in an ethnically heterogeneous CPPT office and a middle-aged Somali client enquired about one of the Somali supervisors, Ali. However, the CPPTs on duty that day were a Nuer man, as well as a Burundian and a Congolese woman who rebuffed him with ‘this is not Ali’s office, it’s the security office, if you have a problem we can receive you, too’. The man declined and insisted on returning the next day to speak with Ali. Later that day, the Congolese explained that ‘when they get their cases it’s only their language [Somali] and they disappear with the clients’. The Nuer added regretfully that some of his CPPT colleagues were often too secretive and inscrutable about cases. ‘Once they take over a case’, he notes, ‘they just solve it here and there without any traces or written records!’¹⁴⁰.

Even though LWF’s governmental control over community policing is highly contested and limited, Li has nonetheless rightly contended that any plan introduced into the social world necessarily also changes it (Li 2007). It would hence be too simple to dismiss concerted technologies of government in Kakuma camp as inevitably failing at managing social dynamics that remain uncontrollable. As a matter of fact, CPPTs often draw on the financial and symbolic resources and assets (Hagmann and Péclard 2010, 549) provided by LWF and UNHCR in order to legitimise their everyday actions, while simultaneously distancing themselves from these institutional centres of power when necessary. Liberal humanitarian governmentality with its language and symbols is thereby incorporated into prevailing social and cultural repertoires which indeed guide the conduct of CPPTs yet without overdetermining policing outcomes. This means that the community policing programme in the camp is not just an organisational shell furnished with practices

¹⁴⁰ CPPT office, 27.02.2017.

which contradict their original intent but has also produced new hierarchies, relationships and sources of symbolic authority that play a role in governing the camp. For instance, businesspeople, business associations and market committees have harnessed the institutional ‘legitimacy’ and proximity of the CPPTs to camp authorities for their own purposes. The modestly famous Ethiopian wholesaler Mesfin (Halais 2017) paid several CPPTs to guard his property at night and made even more long-term investments by funding the construction of a special CPPT office in Kakuma’s Ethiopian market some years back¹⁴¹. As a humanitarian technology of government, community policing not only promotes a set of values, norms and desirable comportments that refugee employees sometimes subvert, but intervenes far more structurally in the field of peace and security by creating precedents for an alternative organisation of policing.

In contrast, the Kenyan government’s vision of local security governance was far less concerned with transforming the choices that refugees make but more with imposing discipline, enforcing acquiescence and strengthening illiberal modes of control. Rather than automatically ensuring compliance, this usually animated CPPTs to more vigorously defy the state’s attempts at dictating their conduct. Despite credible threats of deportation and arrest from the intelligence service in case of non-cooperation with the state, a Congolese CPPT thus wondered, ‘how can you report something to someone who threatens you like that? It’s simple: you don’t, because you cannot trust them’¹⁴². Viewed as a technology of state patronage, community policing in the camp has had limited success in mobilising refugees for counter-terrorism or protecting Kenyan state interests. A reason for this is likely the

¹⁴¹ CPPT supervisor, 01.08.2016.

¹⁴² Interview, 22.08.2016.

lack of long-term incentives for CPPTs to cooperate with Kenyan security services beyond attaining short-term financial and personal gains. In fact, their precarious positions make omissions, misinformation and *ad hoc* insubordination a matter of self-preservation. Abdelhaq, a 45-year-old Somali CPPT, recalled a Kenyan police officer's frustration at the refugee force who alleged that, 'you CPPTs aren't working hard enough, there is *Al-Shabaab* in the camp and you just aren't telling us!'. Eyeing the officer in a composed manner, Abdelhaq replied firmly and point-blank: 'I cannot tell you whether I see *Al-Shabaab*, because you take bribes and tomorrow you might say that I myself was a terrorist all along'¹⁴³.

Finally, while community policing is appropriated by CPPTs and their social networks, it can also put them in a difficult position due to the governmental clout humanitarian agencies and Kenyan authorities have over them. CPPTs often receive threats from their neighbours for sending information 'up' the administrative chain to LWF, the UNHCR, or the Kenyan police. Maryam, a Somali CPPT, recalls reporting her neighbour's children for shattering the windows of an NGO vehicle:

The police beat up the children until they admitted who was guilty; then it was concluded that their mothers had to repay the damage, they contributed and repaid. Since then, they said 'this lady [Maryam] is bad, she can have our children arrested. Let's show her that we can hurt her, too'.

Community policing in Kakuma is hence a matter of permanent negotiation between different governmentalities that often unsuccessfully seek to bind refugees to a given authority, logic or conduct. It hence contravenes the humanitarian aspiration to foster peaceful coexistence among refugees but exposes them instead to new social rifts while removing CPPTs yet further from the 'refugee community' they allegedly

¹⁴³ CPPT, 20.03.2015.

serve. Additionally, in mobilising refugees for policing and surveillance work, the Kenyan government may have attained sporadic disciplinary control over refugee proxies but has ironically forfeited the prospect of committing them genuinely to its long-term security interests.

Conclusion

This article has shed light on community policing as a contested technology of government in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya's north-western Turkana county. Both humanitarian agencies and the Kenyan authorities made efforts to responsibilise refugees towards sometimes opposing ends. As part of their humanitarian mission, LWF and the UNHCR had an interest in investing in locally grounded protection within the refugee population, even though this meant deploying an instrumentalised version of the camp's 'community'. On its part, Kenya's government was more interested in distinguishing compliant and hence supposedly 'good' refugees, who would readily police the camp on behalf of the state, from an ostensibly more recalcitrant 'suspect community' that threatened the security, cohesion and identity of the nation-state.

The literature on community policing in Africa and beyond rightfully emphasises actual practices of everyday order-making and negotiations of sovereign authority between a plethora of formal and informal actors, including the state (Buur and Jensen 2004; Sen and Pratten 2007; Kirsch and Grätz 2010). And, indeed, the governmental technology of community policing in Kakuma was not only under the influence of humanitarian logics as well as the illiberal agenda of the Kenyan regime, but was interspersed with the existing cultural repertoires, practices and customary institutions of the camp's 'deep community'. However, these were largely

unstructured expressions of different forms of counter-organisation working alongside, against and within the community policing framework. Nonetheless, this emphasis on plurality risks relativising the powerful sway of particular governmental programmes which sought to re-organise local security governance by building new social networks, relationships and privileging certain rationalities over others. UNHCR and LWF embarked on a mission to instil their visions of protection and peace-making into CPPTs, which included intimate control over their uniforms and bodies, time keeping, posture and 'professionalism'. Kenyan authorities made use of this humanitarian-sponsored policing infrastructure by infusing it with their own expected conducts and mechanisms of control. It is hence no coincidence that the government showed a growing interest in Kakuma's CPPTs at the same time as it was promoting *Nyumba Kumi* as a way of strengthening public security, surveillance and counter-terrorism across the rest of Kenya.

Community policing thus constituted a potent technology of government through which different interests, pedagogies and interventions on the terrain of 'community' were channelled. The limitations that arose from a more intractable 'deep community' in Kakuma camp were not an outright negation of these governmental powers but were in fact perceived as validation for the urgency of domesticating institutionally illegible and complex forms of social organisation. Indeed, one of the initial humanitarian aims was to use the CPPTs to supersede the councils of elders and alternative customary sources of authority and to re-structure the camp's community in accordance with their own administrative imperatives. Paradoxically, what was conceived as a vehicle for protection and peace-making in the camp was progressively swayed by the Kenyan government to further the securitisation and criminalisation of refugees and asylum-seekers with little

noticeable challenges from LWF and UNHCR. The competing governmentalities over the aims and purposes of community policing in Kakuma are thus indicative of the larger fault lines between the protection and safety of refugees on the one hand as well as their management and exclusion on the other.

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CHAPTER SIX

‘Madmen, Womanisers, and Thieves’: Moral Disorder and the Cultural Text of Refugee Encampment in Kenya

ABSTRACT:

Kenya’s refugee camps have frequently evoked rather dramatic images of terrorist threat and humanitarian crisis. Looking beyond these dominant narratives, this article examines how everyday discourses among camp administrators, that draw on the imagined ‘otherness’ and moral degeneracy of refugees, form a perhaps more meaningful cultural text of encampment. It aims to contribute to an emerging literature on the imaginative dimensions of displacement and humanitarianism, with a nod to the long-standing debates on the politics of territoriality, belonging, and exclusion in postcolonial Africa. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya between July 2016 and September 2017. Three prevalent tropes in the camp are discussed: refugees as street-smart criminals and crooks; as sexually deviant and idle; and as ‘mad’ and ‘uncivilised’. The article argues that this discursive production of refugees as essentially ‘immoral subjects’ has not only a profound impact on the attitudes and actions of state and agency workers, but that it re-articulates the unmistakable coloniality of global humanitarianism, while also cementing Kenya’s own geographies of power. As a result, it is neither the spectre of terrorism nor the prospect of alleviating human suffering, but rather the quest for creating moral order that drives humanitarian practice on the ground.

Keywords: refugee camp; cultural text; otherness; moral order; humanitarianism; everyday discourse; Kenya; Kakuma.

Introduction

An unmistakable link seems to tie the representation of spaces and populations to the methods of their governance. Refugee camps in Kenya have evoked negative imaginaries which oscillate between ‘dangerous sanctuaries’ (Lischer 2006), ‘hotbed[s] of intrigue’ (Crisp 2000, 619), and sites of humanitarian crisis with a ‘lack of normal social structures’ (Bartolomei, Pittaway, and Pittaway 2003, 87). Over the last few years, the spectre of terrorist infiltration of those camps has created an additional layer of fear over insecurity, territorial disintegration, and loss of state control. On 6 May 2016, the Government of Kenya (GoK) responded with the decision to begin closing down the Dadaab camps, a strongly contested process

which it has yet to complete¹⁴⁴. In contrast, humanitarian organisations reiterated the continuing vulnerabilities and protection needs of encamped refugees, and thereby derived their obligation to maintain aid programmes (Rajaram 2002; Agier 2011, 197)¹⁴⁵. This cognitive divide is also reflected in popular perceptions among Kenyan citizens, many of whom acknowledge the need to alleviate human suffering but voice concerns about the economic, social, and security implications of prolonged hospitality (IRC/Twaweza 2018).

Despite the political differences these narratives lay bare, they are infused with similar biases and assumptions about the social and moral lives of refugees. If camps are indeed spatial technologies of care and control for the containment of undesirables (Agier 2011; Hyndman 2000; Brankamp 2019), it is an entrenched vocabulary of 'otherness' and moral exclusion that forms their everyday cultural text. This article examines the discursive practices which write, revise and enact the content of this text in Kakuma, one of the large refugee camps in Kenya's remote northwestern Turkana county. It hosts over 148,000 displaced people from eighteen countries, including South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Eritrea (UNHCR 2018), and has become one of the most high-profile refugee operations on the African continent. Owing to the discursive power wielded by the rivalling narratives of humanitarian compassion and counter-terrorism in political debates in Kenya and beyond, the search for embedded imaginaries and cultural texts must inevitably attend to forms

¹⁴⁴ The State Department of Interior released a statement on 6 May 2016, announcing the closure of both the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps and the repatriation of 600,000 refugees within three months, citing national security concerns. Later, then-Cabinet Secretary Joseph Ole Nkaissery clarified that the closure will only affect Dadaab, while Kakuma would remain open. This decision was challenged by a High Court ruling in February 2017.

¹⁴⁵ On 9 May 2016, UNHCR launched an appeal to prevent the camp closures: <http://www.unhcr.org/57308e616.html>.

of knowledge that are unwritten, subliminal, and perhaps digress from what is deemed 'acceptable' in a wider public. Hence, this study focuses on the collective images and stereotypes about refugees that circulate among camp administrators¹⁴⁶ who themselves are at the forefront of humanitarian and state practice. Like colonial officials, who used paradoxical depictions of the colonised as both childlike and dangerous as well as eroticised and uncivilised (Kothari 2006, 237), camp administrators engage in power-ridden knowledge production that blemishes spaces and people under their authority. In looking beyond official statements of aid agencies and state institutions, the article places particular emphasis on local 'regimes of truth' (Reyna and Glick-Schiller 1998) that feed on imaginations of 'otherness' and offer culturalist interpretations for encampment. This then spins a web of fantasies and facts which engenders the symbolic order of the camp and affirms Mbembe's premonition that 'a regime of exchange exists between the imaginary and the real' (Mbembe 2017, p.130).

The analysis is based on ethnographic research that was conducted in the Kakuma camp between July 2016 and September 2017, using participant observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews with more than 110 interlocutors from the police, humanitarian agencies, government departments and various refugee communities. The research has shown that three discernible tropes are most influential in the camp's discursive field. First, refugees are constructed as street-smart criminals whose dishonesty and proclivity to crime has to be permanently contained. Second, they are hypersexualised as hetero-promiscuous, homosexual, or otherwise sexually deviant, and therefore as corroding Kenya's

¹⁴⁶ Under 'camp administrator' I subsume a number of different actors involved in administering the camp, including national and international humanitarians and NGO workers, government officials, and police officers. In most humanitarian operations, the majority of non-refugee staff employed by organisations and institutions in the camp are citizens of the country of asylum, in this case Kenya.

moral fabric. The third trope depicts refugees as ‘uncivilised’ and ‘mad’, resulting from their traumatic experiences during war-induced displacement as well as their supposedly primordial cultural dispositions. The use of these nefarious images as cognitive frames normalises refugees ‘as certain kinds of subjects’ that imperatively require particular courses of action and must be quarantined from the rest of society (Olivius 2015, 4; see also Blinder 2015, 83). Nothing captured this sentiment in more unequivocal terms than a Kenyan humanitarian¹⁴⁷ suggesting that the most pressing problem in Kakuma was neither terrorism nor humanitarian crisis, but the moral degeneracy attributed to ‘madmen, womanisers, and thieves’¹⁴⁸. This article aims to contribute to growing debates on the imaginative dimensions of humanitarian interventions (Olivius 2015; Ngo and Hansen 2013; Nyers 2006; Rajaram 2002; Balaji 2011; Turner 2004) but also makes connections with Africa’s politics of inclusion/exclusion for which popular claims to territorial and cultural belonging have become paramount (Jenkins 2012; Geschiere 2009; Dorman, Hammett, and Paul Nugen 2007; Lonsdale 2008). While the representations of refugees discussed in this article are based on research in Kakuma refugee camp, its findings resonate beyond this context and demonstrate the genealogical connection between colonial and postcolonial imaginaries of difference.

Dominant narratives: security threats or objects of compassion?

In a 2017 speech before the IGAD Heads of State in Nairobi, President Uhuru Kenyatta alleged that Kenya’s refugee camps had lost their humanitarian character,

¹⁴⁷ The official worked for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a faith-based non-governmental organisation and one of the most prominent aid agencies that has worked in Kakuma camp since the early 1990s.

¹⁴⁸ Public comments made at security awareness training, Kakuma, 19.08.2016.

having come to ‘facilitate agents of terror and destruction’ instead¹⁴⁹. He reiterated that encampment in Kenya is:

a protracted situation characterised by hopelessness that easily feeds environmental destruction; conflicts between refugees and host communities; insecurity; radicalisation; criminality; and allows terrorist operatives to exploit it for their operational efforts.

Only ten months earlier, on 6 May 2016, the Government of Kenya (GoK) had first announced its decision to close Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, citing concerns for national security and, in subsequent statements, the state’s primary duty towards protecting its own citizens.

Whilst perhaps more resolute and candid than ever before, this latest securitisation of asylum-seekers and refugees is not unprecedented. During Daniel arap Moi’s presidency, top-down political rhetoric linked refugees not only to the influx of illicit firearms into Kenya but, following the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, also to a growing terrorist threat (Mogire 2009, 18). On a regional scale, this resonated with existing fears over ‘refugee warriors’ who were thought to endanger the internal security of African states (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989; Okech 2015)¹⁵⁰. After the attacks on Nairobi’s Westgate mall in 2013, the camps received even more negative attention as the Kenyan government claimed that, leading up to the incident, at least one of the perpetrators had lived in Kakuma (Straziuso and Odula 2013; Bii 2013). In Dadaab, a surge in abductions and attacks with grenades and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from 2011 onwards afforded

¹⁴⁹ Opening speech at the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees, KICC, Nairobi, 25 March 2017. The author was in attendance.

¹⁵⁰ Until the signing of Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, Kakuma was considered a rear-base for the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) (Jansen 2018; Schechter 2004) and only later came into focus of ‘terrorist’ activities when its Somali populace grew in the early 2000s.

the refugee camps notoriety, both domestically and internationally (Mukinda and Nyassy 2011; Astariko 2017; BBC 2012) and established them in Kenya's collective imagination as a proverbial 'womb of terror' (Okari 2016). Urban anti-refugee sweeps like Operation Usalama Watch in 2014 seemed to fuel and validate this sense of lasting insecurity among Kenyan citizens (Glück 2017). Refugees, and in particular Somalis, began to be identified systematically as anathema to the stability, peace and cohesion of a country which itself has a troubled history of internal divisions and political strife (Mwangi 2018, 7). Discussing this issue with Kenyans from various backgrounds repeatedly ended in unsubstantiated claims that 'they shelter terrorists in the camps' or that 'refugees can't expect hospitality while killing Kenyans'¹⁵¹. Although these views are not representative of Kenyan society as a whole, there was nonetheless a noticeable surge in these rhetorics from the presidency down to ordinary street hawkers after Westgate, constructing refugee camps as the symbolic loci of a terrorist menace. But camps and refugees have occupied a distinctive place in Kenya's imaginative geographies for even longer. Located in the northern most corners of the country, Kakuma and Dadaab lie outside the boundaries of the imagined Kenyan nation-state, in areas historically associated with cattle rustling, border disputes, insurgencies, and fraught with the ambiguous loyalties of even the local populations (Lind 2017; Weitzberg 2017; Whittaker 2015).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, humanitarian organisations portray refugees in Kenya in rather different, though no less dramatic terms. When the government first ordered the camps shut, twelve major humanitarian organisations published a joint statement, warning of an impending 'humanitarian catastrophe' should the

¹⁵¹ Informal conversation, Kilimani, Nairobi, June 2016.

authorities implement the closure plans¹⁵². The agencies emphasised the continuing vulnerabilities of especially women, children, and unaccompanied minors, and the protection risks they would likely face in case of an involuntary repatriation to their countries of origin. The government tenor was countered with an advocacy campaign that foregrounded notions of humanitarian compassion and refugee victimhood, while ‘reminding’ Kenya of its legal protection responsibilities. In textbook fashion, refugees were positioned as helpless victims of conflict and violence, whose expulsion from Kenya would expose them to even greater risks and insecurities, should their status as subjects of aid cease (see Malkki 1996; Rajaram 2002). Propelling this narrative at the core was a pathos-laden humanitarian notion of ‘common humanity’ which regards the salvaging of downtrodden, marginalised, and displaced populations as a paternalistic duty (Feldman and Ticktin 2010).

Although at first ideologically incompatible, these narratives seem to convey an implicit understanding that refugees are moral outsiders of the domestic and international order. Here, order and crisis ‘constitute separate and distinct [ontological] worlds’ (Nyers 2006, 8), whereby ‘the other of order is ambiguity, chaos and indeterminability’ (Turner 2004, 230). Refugees are embodiments of this imagined lack of order, severed from their places of origin, and therefore unmoored from the comforting logic of the nation-state, while serving as its mirror image and ‘constitutive outside’ (Soguk 1999, 51). Encrypted in these scripts of humanitarian paternalism and the state’s securitisation policies is the sentiment of refugeeness as not only a crisis of the ‘national order of things’ (Malkki 1995), but more

¹⁵² On 11 May 2016, twelve major humanitarian NGOs working in Kenya, including World Vision, Oxfam, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Danish Refugee Council and the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), released a joint statement to urge the Government of Kenya to reconsider its intended closure of the refugee camps. On 9 May 2016, UNHCR launched a similar appeal: <http://www.unhcr.org/57308e616.html>.

fundamentally as a state of 'moral disorder'. While the figure of the refugee-terrorist is characterised as unsavoury and anti-civilisational, the refugee-victim appears as its pre-modern equivalent that needs to be nurtured, taught, and protected, despite moral imperfections (see Duffield 2005). These morally bounded ascriptions are rarely explicit in official communication but instead pervade the everyday representational practices of camp administrators. The following section illustrates that these local articulations of 'otherness' bear more than just a fleeting semblance to colonial processes of subjectification, but in fact re-purpose some of its most toxic imaginaries in the present.

Moral disorder: cultural difference and 'otherness' in Kakuma camp

When asked about security in the Kakuma operation, a Kenyan UNHCR protection officer sighed with tactile frustration and cautioned that 'the camp is another jungle altogether, it's another jungle'.¹⁵³ Perhaps sensing my perplexity at this response, he continued without further prompt that 'we are dealing with refugees here – one, people that do not understand the law; two, people that do not understand order, you see?'. Different shades of this percept are common in the camp, especially among those tasked to enforce the law or provide essential services to refugees. What the protection officer articulated was not just his fear of violent crime, terrorist forays, or even the social upheaval and hardship that displaced populations in the camp faced. But his remarks suggest a deep-seated unease, if not fascination, with the imagined 'otherness' and cultural difference of refugees that makes the camp an emblematic site of 'moral disorder'.

¹⁵³ Interview with UNHCR Protection officer, Kakuma, 20.07.2017.

Indeed, morality is a prominent mode of thought in humanitarian camps, and numerous scholars have observed the emergence of place-specific codes of piety, virtue, and depravity among refugees (Turner 2010; Malkki 1995; Horst 2006; McConnachie 2014). In Lukole camp in Tanzania, Simon Turner noted that refugees employed a moral vocabulary to make sense of changing class, gender, and generational relations that accompanied prolonged displacement (Turner 2010, 83). Malkki showed how Hutu refugees resisted local integration by re-imagining their camp as a place of moral purity that elevates 'refugeeness' as an identity positively distinct from surrounding host communities (Malkki 1995). In Kakuma, a comparably unified vision of the camp as moral community is hard to discern, also because of its unique fragmentation into countless social and ethnic identity groups. Administrative staff working for aid organisations and the state, however, have internalised their own cognitive foils through which to read the everyday occurrences, challenges, and power asymmetries inside the camp, while also situating themselves more meaningfully within them. In a sense, this constitutes an inversion of the kinds of rumours, conspiracies, and fictive rationalities that Turner found among refugees in Tanzania (Turner 2004, 239). Tropes and narratives that emerged in Kakuma were attempts to rationalise and explain refugee encampment and resolve the cognitive dissonance between received top-down imaginaries and real-life encounters. While these tropes, like rumours, have no definite authorship nor origin (Turner 2004, 240), they in contrast depend on the useful illusion of their own naturalness and were assembled from the vestiges of territorial exclusion and a colonial pedagogy of difference.

Often, refugee camps are being constructed as manifesting civilisational opposites that 'reproduce orientalist mappings of the world that deem some people

incapable or unworthy of citizenship' (Rygiel 2012, 808). Camps thus re-articulate a colonial institutional and imaginative divide that first separated native reserves and colonised subjects from citizens and the modern state (Mamdani 1996). In this Manichean binary, spaces of civility were defined in opposition to a contorted mirror image of their supposedly uncivilised 'Other' (Said 1994; Mudimbe 1988; Mazrui 2005; Mbembe 2017). While Africa as a whole was then constructed as the spatial form of that difference (Mbembe 2017, 49) onto which the fears, fantasies, and most disreputable desires of colonialists were projected, present-day refugee camps replicate this symbolism as microcosms of 'otherness' on a smaller scale. Olivius notes that camps appear as 'anarchical, primitive and precivilizational context[s] where refugees act in a purely self-interested way in order to "get whatever they want"' (Olivius 2015, 15). The overwhelming presence of citizens of postcolonial host countries among camp administrators (so-called 'national staff'), however, does not preclude the pervasiveness of a racialised Western-centric humanitarian gaze (Daley 2013; Balaji 2011), but rather complements it with local and nationally-specific understandings of belonging and moral exclusion.

Listening to some administrators in Kakuma, refugees do not seem to represent the sole focus of their efforts, but rather a nuisance to the operation that needs to be monitored and 'disciplined'. During a verification exercise in 2016, a UNHCR officer vented his frustration at how refugees were in compliant and generally disruptive to the 'clockwork' of humanitarian aid, pointing out that 'if you don't organise these people, they will disturb the whole process.'¹⁵⁴ Quotidian representations of this kind make the camp more intelligible and '[work] as a regime of knowledge, a systematic, disciplined system of power – that not only describes,

¹⁵⁴ Kakuma, 04.10.2016.

teaches and rules but also produces' (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 175; see also Gilroy 1993, 5; Bhabha 2004a, 101) the figure of the refugee as 'other'. Local regimes of truth can affect 'how myriad agents feel, think, and act' (Wacquant and Slater 2014, 1275) and accordingly diffuse across the camp's social space. Kakuma's vernacular imaginaries and discourses are therefore not mere by-products of the camp-as-institution but are consequential in that they perpetually perform, reproduce, and vindicate its asymmetrical power relations. But, rather than lacking proper agency, speech, or individuality (Soguk 1999, 243; Malkki 1996; Rajaram 2002), as most critiques of humanitarian imagery suggest, the refugee as 'other' in local discourses in Kakuma assumes the role of a moral stranger and incendiary, a subject endowed with 'the wrong kind of agency' who requires not only spatial, but also social containment.

At least three tropes have captured the imagination of administrators in Kakuma most emphatically: the refugee as a street-smart criminal and crook; the refugee as sexually deviant and idle; and the refugee as mad and uncivilised. What connects these images is their emphasis on (im)morality as a marker of difference that justifies encampment as a measure of insulation from moral disorder that reigns in the camp. Through exploring the circulation of these tropes, it became apparent that while they reinforced the discrimination of refugees as pre-modern or cultural adversary, their articulation as 'local knowledge' was also a sign of defiance to received institutional wisdom from above, as the following examples will show. Nonetheless, scholars have noted the inevitable interplay between bottom-up and top-down narratives in the sense that 'the one presupposes and legitimizes the other' (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 183).

Street-smart criminals and crooks

There was an unspoken understanding in Kakuma that those who work in the camp for long enough, eventually develop a special attunement to ‘disingenuous’ refugee behaviours. High-level UN officials, diplomats, and refugee rights advocates, however, were thought to be too gullible and trusting towards refugees. ‘If you are not intelligent, you can’t manage the Somalis’, an LWF official told me on multiple occasions, hence warning me of deceptive camp occupants, while also professing his own ability to ‘tame’ their most devious tendencies and see through their charades¹⁵⁵.

The list of institutionally undesirable activities in Kakuma is long and includes informal trade in corrugated iron, illicit housing sales, fabrication of insecurity claims for resettlement, bootlegging home-brewed alcohol, and pilfering food, to mention some. The buying and selling of food ration cards, for example, provoked the recent introduction of biometric technology in the camp¹⁵⁶. Several authors have tried to tease out what drives these activities, explaining them as methods for coping with resource scarcity and the harsh conditions of encampment (Harrell-Bond 1986; Jansen 2011; Ikanda 2018), or as a logical reaction to encountering bureaucracies with limited downward accountability (Kibreab 2004). Jansen argues that ‘cheating’ in the camp is best understood as a ‘form of identity politics or impression management’ in a system based on self-portrayal for resource access (Jansen 2008, 577). Resettlement eligibility is determined through hierarchies of protection need, enticing some to develop tactics to conform to ‘ever-moving categories of suffering’ (Ikanda 2018, 593). A police commander in Kakuma pointed out the abundance of ‘self-inflicted crimes in which someone decides to stage manage a crime with the

¹⁵⁵ 02.03.2015, Kakuma.

¹⁵⁶ See Delgado 2013 for more information on the use of biometrics on refugees in Africa.

intention of getting resettlement'¹⁵⁷.

Yet to date, little has been said about the discursive work that the tropes of crookedness and criminality perform among those working in camps. As Horst argued, opposing stereotypes of refugees as 'cunning crooks' or 'vulnerable victims' influence the ways aid workers perceive and interact with them (Horst 2006, 93–94). Bureaucracies are not impersonal apparatuses, and a high-ranking UN official once joked that, 'sometimes, people believe humanitarians are people of a different kind, with higher morals and ethical standards. Of course, sometimes the opposite is true'¹⁵⁸. And, even though humanitarians may be the most typical of administrators, scores of low to mid-level government officials and police officers engage with refugees on a daily basis. In these administrative encounters, cognitive schemes are essential for constructing notions of (un)deservingness. There was no doubt among most administrators in Kakuma that a large proportion of refugees were con artists who took advantage of international aid. An interesting nuance in this narrative among Kenyans was their attempt at 'saming' refugees with the aim of relativising the identities upon which claims of resettlement and protection could be made. Schor argues, 'if othering involves attributing to the objectified other a difference that serves to legitimate her oppression, saming denies the objectified other the right to her difference' (Schor 1989, 45). Many Kenyan police officers or agency employees showed misgivings about the ease with which refugees, especially Somalis, seemed to access resources and settled status in countries in the global North. As a former camp manager put it:

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Kakuma, 02.03.2017.

¹⁵⁸ Informal conversation, Nairobi, 16.06.2017.

What I can say is, when it comes to the Somalis, they are very difficult. Somalis are very difficult to deal with, because they are very cunning. It is easy for them to hold citizenship of even five countries at the same time...

Many Kenyans, who saw themselves as being much closer aligned to Europe and North America in economic and geopolitical terms than most refugee producing countries, were perceived to be denied those same desirable opportunities of flexible citizenship. Worldwide transnational connections which refugees are known to have were taken as additional proof to question their vulnerability and eligibility for aid. Woven into this image is the suspicion towards Kenya's own ethnic Somalis whose 'ambiguous citizenship' (Scharer 2018) has for a long time put their claim to belonging in Kenya into doubt. The government official continued:

...they are very opportunistic, they are very opportunistic! Immediately when you start resettling them, you will end up resettling Somalis from even Garissa.

While many administrators repeated the mantra that 'few Somalis will tell you the truth', they were equally convinced that 'the [South] Sudanese are absolute criminals'¹⁵⁹. These imaginaries of distrust and suspicion have long persisted in Kenyan camps, in which UNHCR has considered both the Somalis and South Sudanese particularly 'difficult populations' (Hyndman 2000, 130). Concretising this widely held belief, police officers in Kakuma felt concerned that refugees were playing a double game of appealing to (white) humanitarians on the one hand, while revealing their true criminal side only to Kenyans on the other. However, the initial warnings I received from an LWF official show that this feeling was not strictly

¹⁵⁹ Informal conversation with Kenyan aid worker, Kakuma, 02.03.2015.

limited to the police. Marcus, a 30-year-old police officer, explains this allegedly false self-presentation in Kakuma's majority-Dinka area of 'Hong Kong':

There is no good or bad youth in Hong Kong. They are all bad, thieves and thugs. When the *wazungu* [white people] show up in their Landcruisers, refugees shout 'our rights, our rights!', but for us Africans there is no such thing. When we [the police] come to Hong Kong they throw stones at our cars and officers. That's how they really are.¹⁶⁰

A senior official in Kenya's Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) conveyed the same sentiment and alleged that, '97% of refugees here are not genuine but look for resettlement or opportunities for crime. Only the remaining 3% have actual refugee claims.' Arguments supporting refugee hospitality were not seldom met with gleeful amusement or dismissed as displaying 'a soft spot for refugees'¹⁶¹. The continuing international aid for Kakuma's refugees was locally met by some with a mixture of incomprehension and gratitude, because even though the ostensible 'reality' about refugees' proneness to crime was widely accepted as truth, the presence of aid agencies secured the livelihood of hundreds of administrators (see also Dadaab Ikanda 2018, 588). A lack of morality was understood as the crux of the matter. In this view, quite remarkably, refugees were not only believed to cheat the international community, but by making decisions for camp closure and repatriation necessary, they were also souring Kenya's much valued relations with Europe and the US on the global stage. Thus, although crookedness and criminality were mostly ascribed to refugees in their interactions with agencies and the state, there was also a deeper fear that their immoral predilections could 'rub off' on the Turkana, who many administrators from southern Kenya paternalistically regarded as their cultural

¹⁶⁰ Informal conversation, Kakuma police station, 21.11.2016.

¹⁶¹ Senior RAS official, Kakuma, 14.12.2016.

protegés. A similar perspective was raised by a Turkana elder during a consultation with refugee leaders, government officials, NGOs, and the UNHCR:

I pity my own Turkana people. Most alcohol that the refugees brew in the camp is sold to the Turkana who finish it all. We are the best customers for alcohol from refugees, and it's ruining our people.

Sexual deviance and idleness

A second trope that sparked popular imagination in Kakuma was the presumed sexual deviance and idleness of refugees. Cultural differences and conflict-related breakdowns of familial bonds were said to be responsible not only for a spread of promiscuous and extramarital relationships, but also for the frequency of defilements and rapes in the camp¹⁶². Humanitarian interventions have a history of policing the health, bodies, and sexuality of beneficiary populations (Hyndman 2000; Fassin 2007), thereby emulating in conspicuous ways the intimate biopolitics and moral order-making of colonial governments (Stoler 2002; Mbembe 2001). Of particular concern to aid organisations in Kakuma were the bodily functions of refugees, which were being monitored and targeted to be reformed through campaigns for improved hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention, a ban on early marriage, or sensitisation about sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Horn 2010; Kiura 2014; Grabska 2010). Billboards across the camp conveyed educational messages to warn of open defecation, domestic abuse, or the detrimental effects of female circumcision. Moreover, gender identity and sexual orientation of refugees were legally relevant as the basis for asylum or protection claims (Spijkerboer 2013; Lewis and Naples 2014).

However, this institutional focus on sexual health and rights masks the

¹⁶² This is based on innumerable instances during my fieldwork in which promiscuity would come up in conversations about security incidents in the camp.

fascination that many administrators have with the sexuality and intimate lives of refugees. Sexuality and desire are in fact structurally embedded in the exercise of power in the camp. As Foucault argued, the societal preoccupation with sexuality often works as ‘a subtle network of discourses, special knowledges, pleasures, and powers’ (Foucault 1998, 71; Stoler 1995) as the organising principle of public morality. Subliminal knowledges about the refugee population in Kakuma co-produce a particular imaginative moral and symbolic order in the camp. Not unlike the exoticised subject in colonial discourses, the refugee hereby becomes ‘at once an object of desire and derision’ (Bhabha 2004b, 96; Stoler 1995) that is judged against the fiction of a superior morality, but nonetheless spurs the fantasies of those exerting power over them. Wilson, a former senior police officer in Kakuma, was both glaringly troubled and fascinated by what he perceived as indecent and hypersexual behaviours among refugees he encountered:

In Kakuma, those people are especially idle. And when they are idle they tend to fuck a lot, or to be fucked. I talked even to Somali ladies, asking ‘why do you really [get] involve[d] in these things?’. They told me, ‘You know once I’ve eaten, there’s no work that I do. I’m being fed so my [only] work is to fuck,’ you see. These are the things...actually I stayed [in Kakuma] and got a good knowledge so that if today I would go to serve there again, I know their ways.¹⁶³

In the officer’s eyes, the provision of material humanitarian aid, which assuages the livelihood responsibilities of refugees, is one of the primary reasons for the increase in promiscuity, while the warm climate of Turkana and the cultural diversity of the camp seemed somehow also conducive of ‘immoral behaviours’¹⁶⁴. Accordingly, for many the moral deterioration of camp life was perceived to be partly due to refugees

¹⁶³ Interview, Nairobi, 14.01.2017.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

‘keeping their old habits’¹⁶⁵, as well as the result of well-meaning humanitarian programmes, a widespread explanation which Turner also heard in Tanzania¹⁶⁶. Idleness and sexual deviance were therefore inextricably linked in accounting for Kakuma’s imagined deficit in morality. The fanciful impression that humanitarians were in effect fostering population growth among refugees was a matter of occasional controversy for Kenyan administrators in the camp but was ultimately looked upon with complacency since the financial bill was footed by rich donor countries.

Furthermore, part of the old habits that refugees are imagined to have brought to the country of asylum, was their ignorance of women’s rights and gender equality. A Kenyan LWF officer routinely warned newly-arrived refugees of Kenya’s progressive laws and cultural values that, he asserted, look unfavourably on early marriage¹⁶⁷. A mid-career police sergeant voiced similar reservations, stating that ‘the way I see it, they marry off small girls, and that’s how women’s rights are violated’¹⁶⁸. As Olivius has convincingly argued, in humanitarian operations often ‘refugee women are represented as victims of “backward” cultures in need of protection from humanitarian workers, cast in the role as saviors, while refugee men are represented as perpetrators of “uncivilized” masculinities in need of reform’ (Olivius 2015, 3; see also Ngo and Hansen 2013). In addition, the gendered dimension of sexual discourse, in which hegemonic and subaltern masculinities are pitted against each other over the protection of women, has an undisputably colonial resonance. The bulk of sexual panics and imaginings in colonial Kenya, too, were the result of social and cultural frictions that arose from moments of encounter and were laced with broader

¹⁶⁵ Kenyan LWF staff, interview, Kakuma, 23.05.2017.

¹⁶⁶ Turner explains how humanitarian assistance was seen to destabilise gender relations in Lukole camp, where the presence of UNHCR had emasculating effects on familial relations in the camp, especially the social positions of refugee men.

¹⁶⁷ Gender Awareness Meeting, Kakuma, 19.08.2016.

¹⁶⁸ Interview, 07.02.2017.

structural inequalities (Anderson 2010, 66). Banter was a prime outlet in the camp through which the threat of hypersexualised and violent virility of refugee men was denounced. Rashid, a young policeman, recounted with horror the story of a Somali lorry driver who was allegedly gang-raped by soldiers in South Sudan, then exclaiming ‘the South Sudanese aren’t good people’¹⁶⁹.

Besides boosting fertility rates in the camp, the impact of ‘Western’ humanitarians on the moral and cultural lives of refugees was also believed to go further. In fact, the presence of white humanitarians, and their presumed inclination towards defending sexual minority rights, was perceived as undermining moral decency and promoting homosexuality in Kenya, where sexual acts between same-sex individuals are strictly prohibited. Again, Wilson explains:

That is also a clip of the problem there. Some refugees were even protesting, making it known that it is their right [to be homosexual]. Because there are those people from Belgium, France, they have legalised same-sex marriages. So, you find those people are also here in the camp because the European community has an interest in the refugee camp. That’s why you find them forcing those bad morals onto refugees¹⁷⁰.

This left refugees in an impossible double-bind of being either perceived as too strongly under the influence of a permissive ‘Western’ sexual morality, or as not yet fully evolved to be part of modern society, and hence enjoy the protection of the host state.

The tension between desire and disavowal across these imaginaries is constant, making some administrators portray refugees as depraved, while secretly engaging in sexual relations with them. It was common knowledge that a great

¹⁶⁹ Informal conversation, 10.02.2017.

¹⁷⁰ Interview, Nairobi, 14.01.2017.

number of refugee children were fathered by police officers, and also that a significant number of officials and humanitarian workers had engaged in casual sex with refugees (see Buckley-Zistel and Krause 2017; Ferris 2007). A senior government officer, who was normally quick to demonstrate his aversion towards refugees, did not hesitate to recount his sexual affairs with Somali women, who he regarded as exotic objects of desire: 'they all look the same with the hijab, but when they take it off, the hair is long and curly!'¹⁷¹. The flipside of publicly performed revulsion at refugee 'immorality' is the exploitative and sexualising gaze that reproduces structural power asymmetries and domination in intimate inter-personal encounters¹⁷². Through these 'perpetual spirals of pleasure and power' (Foucault 1998, 45; Bhabha 2004b) refugees capture the imagination of those exercising administrative authority in the camp, while epitomising feared qualities that justify cultural interventionism.

Madness and uncivilisation

Relatedly, the third pervasive trope in Kakuma camp is that of refugees as 'mad' and 'uncivilised'. Despite some internal differentiations that label certain groups as unrulier than others, this trope acts as a blanket explanation for the violence and chaos that often characterise accounts of humanitarian encampment (Crisp 2000; Hyndman 2004). John, a police officer stationed in Kakuma reasoned that 'most refugees have had terrible experiences in their home countries, so now they are "don't-carers"'¹⁷³. Indeed, displacement and war-related traumas, which many

¹⁷¹ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 10.02.2017.

¹⁷² Despite this being typically a male gaze, there is also an abundance of anecdotal evidence of female administrators engaging in sexual relations with refugees.

¹⁷³ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 07.02.2017.

refugees have suffered, were among the most commonly mentioned reason for their presumed unpredictability and ‘madness’. John continued,

Refugees don’t respect the police. When we disperse a crowd, they come after you and even insult you. In Kakamega [county in western Kenya], you won’t see that a policeman is being insulted or that someone resists an arrest. Here, if you aren’t careful they can even snatch the gun from you.¹⁷⁴

Invoking the insubordination of refugees towards the police is not just a way of illustrating their ‘otherness’, but also for re-imagining fellow Kenyans in contrast as (perhaps improbable) model citizens. Unlike in Kenya’s public discourse, this depicts refugees not as potential terrorists with a disagreeable political agenda, but first and foremost as a pathologised category of humanity. ‘Even killing’, a police inspector observed with confidence, ‘is not a problem to them at all’¹⁷⁵. The prolific pathologisation of refugees is hardly surprising, considering the imaginative power that disease, infection, and trauma continue to have in migration debates (Taylor 2013; Harper and Raman 2008; Marlowe 2010). Pupavac notes that deterministic attributions are embedded in humanitarian operational cultures and ‘[construct] war-affected populations as traumatized and subject to psychosocial dysfunctionality’ (Pupavac 2002, 489). It is hence no coincidence that Kenya’s refugee camps have been described as ‘highly dysfunctional entities’ (Crisp 2000, 624). Yet while the ascription of anti-social or immoral behaviours to war-time trauma is indeed widespread, notions of social dysfunctionality can also attain distinctly culturalist and racialised overtones. Once again, John explained,

¹⁷⁴ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 07.02.2017.

¹⁷⁵ Interview, Nairobi, 14.01.2017.

I think it's because of the laws they are used to. Their laws are different from our laws. Also, they were brought up fighting with wars raging around them. Culture is another factor – our culture is different from theirs.¹⁷⁶

Although past wars and conflicts are rationalised as major causes for social and moral disorder in Kakuma, culture in its most essentialised form is constructed as a 'natural' spring from which lawlessness flows. Kakuma's police commander was therefore convinced that South Sudanese refugees 'are violent by nature and they aren't used to functioning laws'¹⁷⁷. This resonates with the imagined figure of the 'barbarian' that Duffield depicts as a cultural antagonist to civilisation which he 'despises, covets and constantly fights' (Duffield 2005, 148). Subscribing to the same disparaging symbolism, a senior government official in Kakuma described the ordering principle of the camp as the 'politics of the head bone' in which 'you knock people down with your head and fist before thinking.' Manifesting this discursive othering even further was the perpetuation of iniquitous colonial images of 'savagery' which had infused the minds and logics of many camp administrators, who routinely accused refugees of cannibalism, sodomy, and witchcraft¹⁷⁸.

Despite the overwhelming role that Kenyans played in these discursive fields, due to the sheer numbers of 'national staff', international (and especially white) humanitarians seemed to also thrive on spectacular stories that could affirm their racialised fears and stereotypes about refugees. Moreover, the imagined moral and cultural incompetence of beneficiaries presented a convenient explanation for recurrent challenges and glitches in the operation, acquitting aid workers of their

¹⁷⁶ Informal conversation, Kakuma, 07.02.2017.

¹⁷⁷ Informal conversation, Kakuma police station, 08.12.2016.

¹⁷⁸ This refers to a number of smaller incidents when members of the police or aid agencies would reminisce in cases in which refugees were caught engaging in homosexual acts, divining, or allegedly in cannibalism.

structural responsibilities, while locating shortcomings in the disagreeable lives of the displaced. A white female humanitarian official was under the impression that particular refugees themselves were the main obstacle to a smooth ‘functioning’ of the camp:

I don’t mean this in a derogatory way, but the Lotukos are fucking bush people that don’t even know how to use a toilet. There are all sorts of innovative projects, but we can’t even fucking make them stop FGM-ing themselves, so how are they going to learn more complex stuff?”¹⁷⁹

As opposed to ‘refugee crooks’, who supposedly undermine the aid operation out of ill-will and for personal profit, this racialised account singles out the South Sudanese Lotuko as uncivilised culprits of disorder, unworthy of receiving humanitarian assistance. The imagery and messages that accompany these representations often compare refugees to gregarious animals that need to be herded, disciplined, and kept in enclosures. One UNHCR officer maintained at a field post in Kakuma, ‘if we didn’t have these fences here, we wouldn’t be able to manage these people. I knew that from day one.’ The discursive production of the refugee as mad and uncivilised, in addition to de-humanisation, has served the legitimisation of the organisational, material, and moral foundations of encampment. On top of delivering aid to indigent refugees, the camp is hereby reconfigured as the symbolic locus of a humanitarian civilising mission, a space of ‘social and cultural transformation and modernization’ (Olivius 2015, 12; see also Paris 2002). Thus, discursive articulations of difference point at the affective and imaginative side of refugee encampment, as the following section shows.

¹⁷⁹ Informal conversation, UNHCR compound, Kakuma, 15.08.2016.

The cultural text of encampment

Representations of immorality, contagion, and peril, irrespective of factuality, have the power to socially inscribe stigma onto particular spaces and, by extension, those who inhabit them (Wacquant 2007). The symbolic significance of negative tropes and imaginaries in Kakuma can therefore not be overstated, as they amount to more than ‘simply’ a discursive field, but in fact take centre-stage in the exercise of everyday power. Forms of spatial stigma pervade the institutional practices of humanitarian agencies and the state. While the nature of the camp as a vehicle of spatial fixation and domination has been much debated (Minca 2015; Agier 2011; Jaji 2012), its tendency to simultaneously create a state of *moral* exclusion for its occupants has escaped more in-depth scrutiny. Discourses around refugee encampment in Kenya are imbued with inculpatory notions of exclusion and moral (in)competence which arbitrarily differentiate between refugees living in camps and Kenyan citizens on the outside (Agier 2011, 216), defying realities on the ground. Spatial containment and mobility controls are hence part of the same contiguous process of order-making as the moral defamation of refugees through a subliminal cultural text. As Wacquant and Slater have demonstrated, this cultural grammar of managing unwanted populations can have far-reaching consequences for the psycho-social lives of those targeted, affecting their everyday encounters with the police, health care, and social services, fragmenting communities, and corroding their sense of self worth, while even reproducing and validating spatial taint by setting in motion socially ‘undesirable’ coping strategies (Wacquant and Slater 2014, 1275). While the position of refugees as non-citizens, rootless outcasts, and strangers in a ‘national order of things’ (Malkki 1995) may be particular, the nature of their moral exclusion is not entirely dissimilar to those residing in informal urban settlements elsewhere in

Kenya. Nairobi's 'slums' are held in nation-wide disrepute for incubating violence, poverty, and crime, and are thereby relegated to the status of enduring marginality and domestic exile (Kimari 2018; van Stapele 2016). Diagnosing 'moral disorder' in these spaces through emphasis on cultural difference, lack of respectability, and indecency sensitively questions the inclusion of these occupants to a wider national society and, perhaps even, the common humanity which humanitarianism nominally upholds¹⁸⁰.

The refugee camp in particular is susceptible to being coded as an enclave of 'otherness' that inverts the properties most cherished among a collectivity of 'us', and thus separates 'ours' from 'theirs'. But against the background of Kenya's ethno-territorial geographies of belonging, the camp is relegated to an even more precarious position 'out-of-place'. Ethnicised identities in Kenya are frequently inscribed with differential notions of morality and 'marks of civilisation' (Lonsdale 2008, 311; Lynch 2006). Lonsdale notes that ethnicity thus weaves a 'system of moral meaning and ethical reputation within a more or less imagined community' (Lonsdale 1996, 132) which distinguishes members from those who are not. Kenya's recent history of ethnically-inflected electoral violence has shown that such divisions surface vigorously even among formal citizens, as in many societies in postcolonial Africa (Dorman, Hammett, and Paul Nugen 2007; Geschiere 2009; Lonsdale 2008; Lynch 2011). While prolific ethno-territorial thinking in Kenya maps opposing ethnic communities as strangers, immigrants or intruders on mutually exclusive zones of influence and belonging (Jenkins 2012), refugees constitute an even more problematic group, deprived of even the most basic citizenship rights, not to mention

¹⁸⁰ Indeed, while marginalised youth in Kawangware, Mathare, Kariobangi, or Kibera hold precarious citizenship by virtue of being disenfranchised, defamed, and excluded from Kenya's imagined political community, the refugee camps are home to large numbers of 'foreigners' who can make far less convincing claims to local and national belonging.

being excluded from ownership claims to ancestral homelands in their country of asylum. Even though in this ethno-territorial order of things, Kakuma may have become a 'surrogate homeland' to which refugees are expected to return, the camp's spatial envelopment by Turkana-dominated areas makes it an uncertain home that is never fixed and always in danger of dissolution. A senior government official in Turkana-West remarked at a public gathering in the camp that:

Some refugees who come here think that the compounds they live in are theirs. This land is community property of the Turkana, not private property. No refugee holds his own land as property. The land is ours here.

This categorical exclusion of refugees from Kenya's territorial patchwork of ethnic communities is further laced with a decidedly moral repudiation. 'Hakuna Congo ama Sudan hapa. Hapa ni Kenya!'¹⁸¹, a Kenyan LWF official declared in front of a group of refugee youth. Moral tropes concerning the 'otherness' of refugees have been fully incorporated into everyday parlance and representations by camp administrators. This has contributed to a naturalisation of the camp as an institution of cultural transformation from savagery to acceptable humanity. For Kenyan administrators in particular, moral identities are an easy anchor point with which to elevate and reformulate imagined internal commonalities as Kenyans in the context of the country's volatile and ambiguous identity politics. Thus, the emotive imagery of moral disorder is an attempt to salvage the vestiges of a fractured 'Kenyanness', and a conducive foil on which colonial imaginings and anxieties about 'others' can be expressed. Therefore, the refugee camp is the symbolic locus where the diaphanous boundaries of Kenya's moral and cultural belonging are reimagined as

¹⁸¹ Kiswahili: 'This is not Congo or Sudan. Here is Kenya!'.

definite and predisposed. Not least, for international and white agency staff, the encampment of subaltern populations represents a veritable heart of darkness that carries with it a plethora of myths, moral panics, and secret pleasures of colonial difference. Thus, the cultural text of humanitarian encampment is neither static in its substance nor inconsequential in its effects but describes the noxious conjuring of cultural ghosts for the subjectification of refugees as moral aliens.

Conclusion

Popular imaginations of refugee camps in Kenya are ambivalent and contested. Latently feeding dominant narratives of humanitarian compassion and terrorist threats are entrenched biases and imaginaries without which our understanding of how refugee camps are governed remains unsatisfactory and incomplete. For that reason, this article tried to analyse the cultural text that underwrites encampment of refugees in Kakuma, a refugee camp located in the northwestern periphery of Kenya. A deluge of tropes around the imagined (im)morality of refugees has gained enormous currency in the local discursive fields whose heterogeneous membership comprises humanitarians, government officials, and police officers. Whether disseminated by Kenyans or internationals, embedded imaginaries of 'otherness' cannot be divorced from an enduring colonial pedagogy that has spun a web of exclusionary knowledges as the symbolic order of the camp. This order may give partial meaning to a blend of social relations which seem otherwise unfathomable and out of place, but their free circulation in the camp ultimately deepens the predicament and seclusion of those they depict. Despite the primacy of counter-terrorism and emergency aid in policy debates, it is the moral localisation of refugees in society and a wider global order that administrators are oftentimes most concerned

with, thereby ‘linking the little banal social poetic with the grand dramas’ (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 175). Imaginations are thus all but irrelevant for the study of humanitarianism, but precisely through their fictionality they offer a glimpse of reality that would otherwise escape the most thorough analysis.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION



Figure 22: Police reservists during Madaraka Day 2017, Kakuma (source: author).

Introduction

‘Beat them hard. We want them to learn.’ (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 1989, 68)

In light of the global preoccupation with migration enforcement, border fortification, and interception of refugees and asylum-seekers along North-South borderlands, this thesis has shifted attention to the policing of displaced populations further away from the popular media spotlight and academic gaze. While many governments in Europe, North America, and Australia have boosted their efforts to prevent, discourage, and criminalise the outward movement of people from formerly colonised societies, they have simultaneously been adamant in supporting humanitarianism and the delivery

of aid in many countries of origin. Humanitarian camps in particular, though almost universally understood as undesirable responses to mass displacement, have thereby retained a default legitimacy as conveniently remote ‘safe havens’ which are usually located in the territorial margins of the postcolonial South. Indeed, refugee camps are often described as ‘warehouses’ (Smith 2004; Agier 2011) where aid organisations care for refugees living in a limbo that supposedly heightens their levels of insecurity, frustration, social fragmentation and even fosters the proliferation of further violence. This has entrenched common perceptions of camps being administered under near-sovereign authority of humanitarian agencies like UNHCR (Moulin and Nyers 2007; Hyndman 2000) while raising the spectre of militarisation and conflict from among refugee populations (Lischer 2006). Not only does this risk pathologising insecurity, and simultaneously places responsibility for it on the displaced themselves, but – and in contrast to prevalent debates on asylum and migration in Euro-America – it writes the state itself out of any role in managing displacement in the global South.

This omission has been most noticeable in African countries, that host at least one-quarter of the world’s displaced today. As this thesis has stressed, in recent years state agencies throughout the continent have become increasingly involved in formal processes of registration, status determination (RSD), and the verification of refugees which have hitherto been the *de facto* prerogatives of UNHCR. Against this backdrop, however, it is also easy to forget that African states have indeed always been vital for humanitarian operations, not least through deploying police and paramilitary forces to refugee-hosting areas and camps for decades. A key aim of this thesis was therefore to counter the imbalance that policing of refugees and asylum-seekers *within* African societies has garnered far less attention than the militarised enforcement at Europe’s borderlands *with* the continent or even the profiling of racialised non-white bodies in

the geographical midst of Europe. In the popular imagination, Africa remains a stage for more distant humanitarian interventions which are presented as preludes, if not reasonably humane alternatives, to more proximate policing efforts by border guards, the police, or the navy once refugees and asylum-seekers reach European waters. But as Hyndman reminds us in her influential study on the uneven geographies of refugee management – ‘the placement in displacement matters’ (Hyndman 2000, 25). This thesis has illustrated that this holds equally true for policing displacement, displaced populations, and migration enforcement generally. While the literature has especially emphasised the managerial violence that is inscribed in humanitarian bureaucracies, classifications, calculations, and biopolitics (Hyndman 2000; Agier 2011; Jaji 2012), this study has gone further by shedding light on the complicities of humanitarianism in equally incentivising and perpetuating physical violence, militarisation, and police power at the margins. ‘Policing’, in its different meanings beyond state violence, is integral to continuously redrawing the boundaries between desirable and undesirable life, between movement and fixity, as well as between a national order of things and its outside. This concluding chapter is an attempt to connect the preceding arguments about a ‘darker side’ of humanitarian governance and offers some final reflections on what is at work – spatially, governmentally, and discursively – in policing refugees in camps. As will become evident below, the geographies of humanitarian enforcement do not just operate on multiple spatial scales in the camp but are also infused with temporal links to the colonial past.

Almost certainly, the dynamics in Kakuma camp in Kenya’s north-western Turkana county are not representative of refugee camps generally but nonetheless speak to wider postcolonial geometries of state power, violence, and exclusion found

elsewhere. Refugee-hosting countries in Africa are not merely doing the ‘rowing’¹⁸² for ‘Western’ states seeking to keep refugees at bay, but most of the governments on the continent are equally self-interested and deeply embroiled in their own struggles over state sovereignty, citizenship, security, mobility, and belonging. Historically, Turkana has been a backwater of Kenya’s nation-state and marked a frontier where British colonial authorities could banish unwanted individuals like the ‘Kapenguria six’ in 1953¹⁸³, but over which they had ultimately little substantial territorial control. Despite exhibiting the same harsh living conditions, spatial marginality, and indeed unforgiving climate today, Kakuma and the surrounding Turkana countryside have recently been re-imagined by the World Bank as an unlikely place of opportunity, social inclusion, resilience, and economic vibrancy (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru 2016). This was embellished even further with a globally-celebrated and UNHCR-sponsored TEDx event that took place in the refugee camp in 2018¹⁸⁴.

Kakuma has become the research focus of a small genre of studies on identity, resettlement, refugee economies, and livelihoods (Jansen 2018; Oka 2011; Grayson 2017; Jansen 2016; Bartolomei, Pittaway, and Pittaway 2003; Betts et al. 2014) that have rendered it in the eyes of some observers ‘by far the most intensely and positively written-about camp in the world’¹⁸⁵. Much of this work continues to treat the Kenyan state as little more than an appendix of the aid regime, perpetuates the binary between humanitarian management and local forms of authority, or focused problematically

¹⁸² This is a reference to Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) characterisation of the state doing the ‘steering’ while simultaneously delegating the ‘rowing’ to other (non-state) actors.

¹⁸³ The ‘Kapenguria six’, who included later first president Jomo Kenyatta, Bildad Kaggia, Kung’u Karumba, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, and Achieng’ Onoko, were charged with sedition in the context of the colonial ‘Mau Mau Emergency’ (1952-1960) and were sentenced to imprisonment and internal exile in the remote Lokitaung and Lodwar prisons in Turkana.

¹⁸⁴ For some critical reflections on Kakuma’s TEDx event, see Brankamp 2018.

¹⁸⁵ Twitter, Jeff Crisp (@JFCrisp), former UNHCR Head of Policy Development and Evaluation and Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 02.05.2019.

on the ‘hidden’ entrepreneurial potential of refugees that smart aid programming can supposedly unlock. This thesis has not only critically intervened in this knowledge on Kakuma camp specifically but has pointed to the underlying structures that place it within deeper systems of humanitarian violence and policing that are indicative of the enduring coloniality of governing populations through encampment. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s above fictional postulation – which superbly articulates the paradoxes of violence and education under formal colonial rule – resonates equally with the moral pedagogy of humanitarianism in refugee camps, where the ostensibly ‘caring’ hand of assistance is never far from the cane.

The coloniality of policing refugees

Far from being a distinctly contemporary concern, the humanitarian encampment of refugees on the African continent echoes much longer histories of governing mobile populations, non-citizens, and recalcitrant colonial subjects. Colonial policing was oftentimes marked by separations between an urban or coastal force and paramilitary units which operated along the shifting frontiers and less ‘stable’ continental interiors that were largely unoccupied (Anderson and Killingray 1991). During ‘emergencies’ and unforeseen circumstances in particular, concerted enforcement was only possible through what Netz called a ‘topological inversion’ in which a vast countryside was ‘pacified’ by gathering and controlling its population in fortified camps (Netz 2010, 102). However, this does not mean that colonial encampment had a single, transfixed purpose or form but it was constantly adapted according to the changing needs and priorities of the colonial administration’s will-to-order.

The unregulated mobility of pastoralists in northern Kenya have always posed a challenge for effective territorial rule and policing the colonial boundaries (Waller

2012). Early British famine relief camps in Turkana hence concentrated these mobile populations in central locations and prevented their unchecked movements, making them simultaneously technologies of aid and enforcement (see Little and Leslie 1999; Hogg 1982; McCabe 2004; Jansen 2011).

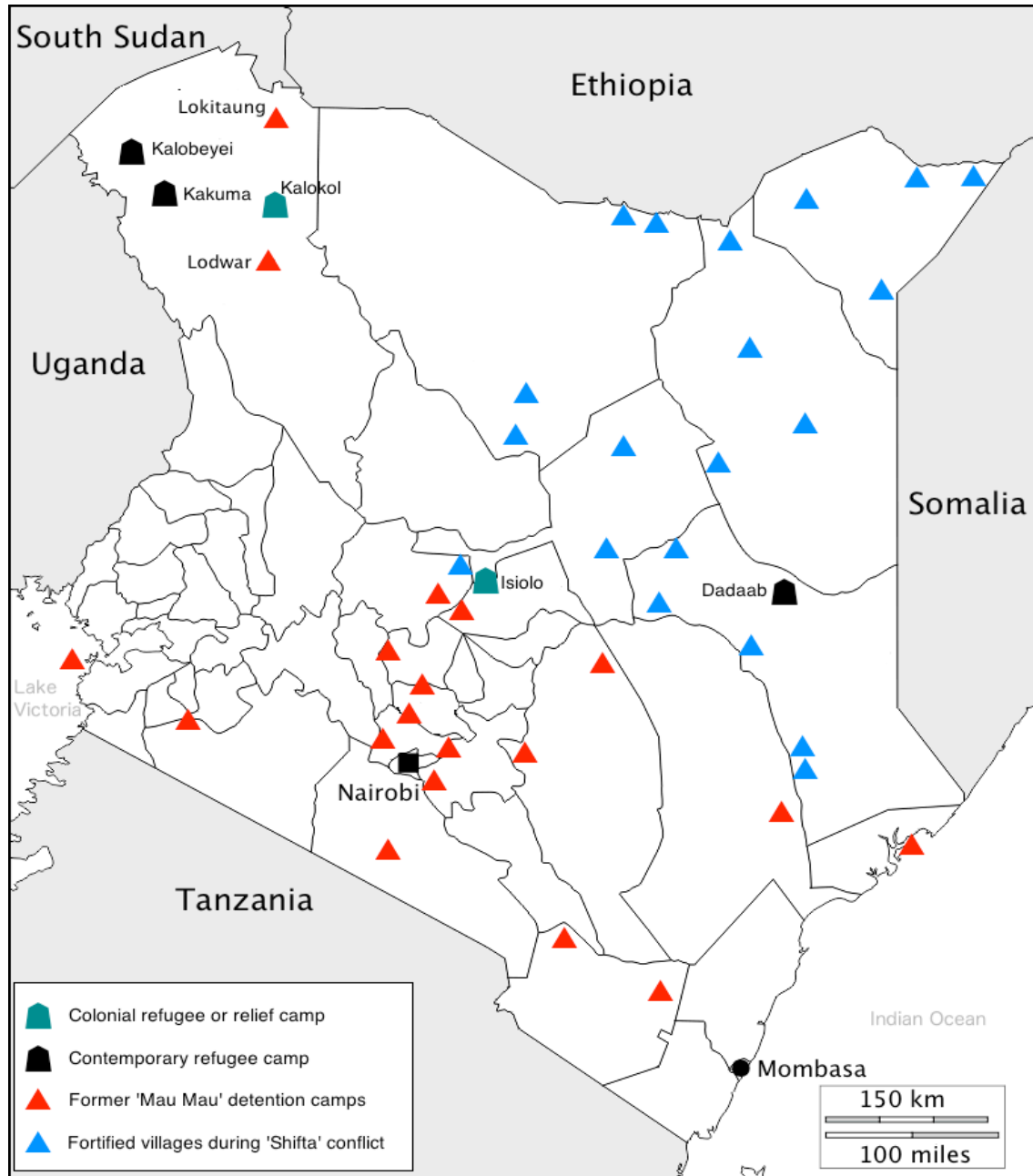


Figure 23: Selection of colonial and postcolonial camps in Kenya (source: author)¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁶ The specific camp locations for this map are taken from Hannah Whittaker's *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Kenya* (Whittaker 2015, 115) and Caroline Elkins' *Imperial Reckoning* (Elkins 2005, 150).

In 1937, following Italy's occupation of neighbouring Abyssinia, this logic of spatial control was applied once again to the 6,000 Ethiopian refugees who fled into colonial Kenya where British authorities decided to establish a camp near the town of Isiolo (Sequeira 1939). This colonial refugee camp was then portrayed as a space for curbing both the spread of infectious diseases and those supposedly carrying them into the rest of Kenya. Containment was hence not just a decidedly spatial but a biopolitical colonial practice par excellence. This was driven to more extremes during Britain's counter-insurgency campaign against the 'Kenya Land and Freedom Army' (1952-1960) when Kenya's colonial state devised an archipelago of camps to spatially organise 'insubordinates' into graduated categories of threat that ranged from active insurgents, their sympathisers, and abettors down to colonial loyalists (Branch 2009; Elkins 2005). Encampment constituted the bedrock and often last resort of colonial control over geographically dispersed, 'foreign', and undesirable populations and led Kenya's post-independence state to use comparable strategies of forced villagisation against Somali-Kenyan secessionist insurgents in the country's north-east between 1963 and 1968 (Whittaker 2015).

A brief survey of this history is instructive to make sense of the contemporary prominence of the camp in policing displacement. Mountz (2011) argues that camps and detention facilities indeed have a haunting presence, especially where colonial and postcolonial histories converge in producing increased forms of marginality and domination. Camps thus embody 'residual effects of oppression and its connection to the state, even where the state appears absent in everyday life' (Mountz 2011, 122). Residual institutional memories of encampment are especially tenacious in Kenya's northern belt where the colonial state once strived towards blanket pacification and where postcolonial authorities continue to enforce order in refugee camps through

remarkably similar means of militarised occupation (see Chapter 4). Haunting is thus 'one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with' (Gordon 2008, xvi). What remains of these colonial technologies of policing, popular imaginaries, and spatial formations in the humanitarian present?

Humanitarianism is usually presented as a liberal place-holder and successor of the colonial project, a refashioned 'colonialism of compassion' (Hyndman 2000, 60) that seems to lack the same systemic brutality and vicious determination but bears unintended harmful consequences nonetheless. While this reading correctly emphasises the symbolic continuity that links humanitarian action to colonialism, it is also somewhat revisionist in that it effaces the fact that both are structurally rooted in the same global power asymmetry and the civilising mission. Against the backdrop of rising xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiments, Rutazibwa questions this growing mythification of contemporary liberal humanitarianism as a panacea and writes,

Thinking about the role of humanitarianism today requires that we don't reproduce or unwittingly celebrate Western-led order by mourning the end of a history that never actually existed. Given past and present non-Western experiences of liberal order, we might ask: what's there to mourn? (Rutazibwa 2019, 65)

Coloniality provides a productive lens through which to revisit humanitarianism and the policing of the displaced without falling into this trap. Quijano (2000) famously saw the 'coloniality of power' as a compounded power over knowledge production, racialised subjectivities, economic relations, and social hierarchies which reify logics of domination, subjection, and difference. Accordingly, a key thread throughout this thesis has been that humanitarianism is not just a 'liberal' form of managing refugees

but reinforces institutionally colonial and illiberal modes of governing populations as subjects of ‘emergency’ and threats. This is an important addition to the literature as it reimagines policing not as an incidental circumstance that humanitarian actors can shape, reform, or assuage but as constitutive of the humanitarian system itself. Thus, mirroring Mignolo’s critique of dominant discourses on modernity at large, although humanitarianism is frequently being ‘presented as a rhetoric of salvation, it hides coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation’ (Mignolo 2007, 162).

Engaging with the policing of refugees in humanitarian camps is indispensable if we want to understand how global aid governance is consolidated and reproduced at the margins. It follows spatial patterns of control that are genealogically connected to colonial occupations and likewise blurs the boundary between civilian, police, and military administrations. Within such spaces of aid, refugees are recruited in order to enforce humanitarian order through indirect governmental mechanisms reminiscent of a colonial government in which ‘local law enforcement practices were invalidated and imperial structures imposed’ (Brogden 1987, 14). This link has hitherto remained unrecognised in most existing work on refugee encampment, maybe not least because scholarship on humanitarianism has suffered from a rather severe form of ‘colonial amnesia’ (Rutazibwa 2019, 66). Revisiting the camp as a technology of policing must therefore begin with the construction of the refugee as a colonised subject embedded in discursive representations of ‘otherness’. Tascón elucidates the parallels between the status assigned to refugees and those of colonised peoples. She writes,

both groups have been exiled, one internal and one external to their place of origin; both have been non-citizens at some point; both have been subject to laws that mandatorily detain them; and both have been subjected to racialised treatment. Both have endured intense state surveillance that has sought to exclude, contain and reject. (Tascón 2004, 239)

Maybe it is this lingering effect of racialised difference and discriminatory governance Mbembe had in mind when characterising refugees as the ‘new wretched of the earth’ (Mbembe 2017, 177). Ahmed (2019) compellingly demonstrates that this is not to be confused with Agamben’s (1998) figure of *homo sacer* – the person who may be killed but not sacrificed – who is implied to have previously possessed the political rights of a full citizen of human society until their banishment. For Ahmed, however, refugees as embodiments of the racialised displaced have always fundamentally been ‘less-than-whole citizens’ (Ahmed 2019, 157), whose status as equal humans with juridical personhood was already in question. The discursive and symbolic production of the refugee as a colonised subject is thereby linked to their ordering through pedagogies of violence that were deemed appropriate and complemented by methods ‘of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area —of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations’ (Mbembe 2003, 25). The policing of refugees in the present is not a simulation of past colonial order but is grounded in the assertive legacy of the same postcolonial forces. Coloniality not only pervades the planetary geopolitics of displacement and humanitarianism, which include direct intervention, asymmetrical donor regimes, institutional racism, and mechanisms of deterrence, but equally shapes the exclusionary practices and discourses of difference in formerly colonised societies themselves (see Chapter 6). These structurally unequal power relations exceed enforcement of a restrictive border regime that physically and metaphorically ‘place[s] some within and others outside’ (Tascón 2004, 240), but also manages and hierarchises the intimate lives of the displaced, their subject positions, and the concomitant mobilities which these borders represent.

Like disciplinary forms of humanitarianism today, colonial policing in Africa was always Janus-faced and relied on the concurrent application of ‘repression and

paternalist care' towards the governed population (Schlichte 2017, 21; see Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). Colonial administrations further depended on mobilising the colonised themselves in order to expand and consolidate their otherwise fragile governmental reach by 'producing new behaviors of self-regulation and desired aptitudes [which] include not only coercion but also surveillance and education' (Frederiksen 2014, 1276). An equivalent in humanitarian operations is the expansion of peace education programmes, trainings, and other pedagogies intended to reform the refugee population and channel their capacities into supporting activities which preserve the power of aid institutions (Sagy 2008). Recruiting refugees for community policing in Kakuma camp is such a form of mobilisation and is legitimised through the social construction of the 'community' as the appropriate terrain of organisation for the displaced (see Chapter 5). Machar, a 39-year old South Sudanese CPPT in Kakuma camp, expressed how he felt about this thinly-veiled deputisation of refugees in the service of humanitarian agencies and in conjunction with Kenyan authorities, despite the liberal visions that foregrounded responsibility, empowerment, and self-regulation.

Kenyan laws are Kenyan laws. South Sudanese laws are South Sudanese Laws. I can't break the laws which have been set and I can't say that laws are not working because they have been set like this. Every country has its own institutions. Yeah, *that is the law of the police*. If they decide to beat me or if they disagree with me in terms of work, I can say, yeah it is their right and even me I have rights. If they allow me to talk, I can talk and if they don't want to allow me, I can even keep quiet. Yeah, this I don't have anything about that matter.

This has some resonance with the tightly-controlled sphere of the 'customary' which Mamdani conceptualised as the only officially authorised form of social organisation for African subjects in the 'bifurcated' colonial state (Mamdani 1996, 18). Likewise, Machar's invocation of the 'law of the police' is shorthand for the supremacy of state

power that propels feelings of powerlessness among refugees, even for those working as CPPTs and therefore nominally in positions of relatively devolved authority. Akin to colonial indirect rule, community policing in the camp is neither concerned with democratising state nor humanitarian power but ‘with enforcing it’ (Mamdani 1996, 125).

This has purchase beyond the confines of the refugee camp and illustrates the ambivalent relationship Kenyan citizens continue to have with the state today. Entire sections of the population such as ethnic Somalis or Nubians, who are kept in limbo as ambiguous and precarious citizens and are often popularly not considered part of the country as a result of their ethnic identity, lack of claims to ancestral lands, and historically-rooted marginalisation (Scharrer 2018; Mahmoud 2008; Balaton-chrimes 2014). In addition, a great number of youth and urban poor are excluded from equal participation and opportunities in Kenyan society due to their economic and social position at the margins. Precarious Kenyan citizens and refugees therefore share an uneasy relationship with the policing arms of the state which means that far too often the juridical order is for them indeed simply the law of the police. Kenya’s security architecture is in large measures a remnant of the colonial era and was thus preserved during the presidencies of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi after independence. Their priority has been to control unsavoury citizens, non-citizens, and dissenters at the social peripheries of society in order to not only protect the incumbent regime but ensure the stability of the postcolonial political order more generally (Hills 2000). As refugees and asylum-seekers are legal aliens in Kenya, this policing apparatus is used to underwrite official policies of encampment and is able to reinforce an institutional segregation, territorial fixity, and exclusion under the pretence of humanitarianism which would be conceivably more difficult to instate for second-class citizens outside

the paradigm of aid, despite the evidence of systemic discrimination (Lochery 2012). If we believe Frantz Fanon (2004) that the border of the colonial world was indeed once marked by barracks and the police stations, then we must also recognise that this division has not fully faded in our postcolonial world.

Reckoning with morality, violence and (il)liberal humanitarianism

Despite aspirations of impartiality and depoliticisation, humanitarianism has continued to be a contested terrain of (geo)politics and morality. In the conclusion of her book *Managing Displacement*, Hyndman notes that despite the shortcomings we observe in humanitarian interventions today, ‘doing nothing at all is not an option’ (Hyndman 2000, 170). This expresses a central dilemma for critical research because it succumbs to the pretension that humanitarian action is without viable alternatives and can be reformed to serve its proclaimed purpose as the first line of protection for millions of unfortunates affected by disasters, displacement, and conflicts. Especially in light of rising racism and anti-immigrant attitudes globally, humanitarianism may appear like a beacon of liberal values to nurture and hold on to in order to stem the tide of violence, hatred, and parochialism. How do we engage with the humanitarian enterprise and its unintended complicities in compounding violence when confronted with a more fundamental denial of the rights and humanity that it seeks to protect?

This predicament is rooted in imperatives of compassion which have evolved into a set of seemingly self-evident governmental logics and a moral economy which act as our ‘humanitarian reason’ (Fassin 2011). Fassin argues that ‘humanitarianism has become a language that inextricably links values and affects and serves both to define and justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings’ (Fassin 2011, 2). Critical scholarship hence treads the fine line between analysing the

structural violence which humanitarian practices (re)produces, while acknowledging their grounding in a morally defensible ideology of care for the destitute, displaced, and misfortunate. Without doubt, this has to do with the forms, pace, and legibility of the violence because humanitarian interventions, if not enabled directly by police and military power, are often productive of slower, morally-legitimated, bureaucratic and symbolic violence towards their subject populations. This 'slow violence' which humanitarianism cultivates 'might hinder sustainable solutions and contribute to the continued precarity of life for those affected' (Daley 2013, 894). Therefore, the choice between 'doing nothing' and accepting fundamentally flawed humanitarian practices is misleading because it presumes a binary of letting violence prevail on the one hand and trying to counteract it on the other. However, the problem with humanitarianism are not the technical imperfections but rather its often systemic alignment with power – not least state power – that inadvertently reinforces ideas and practices that elevate certain life over others, produce precarious subjectivities, and spatially fixate refugees in the administrative space of protective zones and camps. Privileging the alleviation of suffering and violence, which is most legible to powerful organisations, states and agencies, reinscribes their power over affected populations and necessarily implicates researchers in this process, too. Reckoning with the duplicitous morality and violence of actually existing humanitarianism without denying broader agendas of solidarity and assistance can trouble critical scholars. However, Ticktin resolves this tension by stressing the reactionary rather than transformative nature of humanitarianism which means that 'regimes of care ultimately work to displace possibilities for larger forms of collective change' (Ticktin 2011, 3).

This thesis has grappled with the same underlying conundrum and ultimately recognises that simply abandoning humanitarianism in its current form is not enough

unless there is concurrent political change. Although migration policing and border enforcement are indeed intimately connected to humanitarianism and aid operations today (Walters 2011; Pallister-Wilkins 2017; Hyndman and Giles 2016), there is little to suggest that their violent corollaries for refugees, asylum-seekers, or other migrants are diminished by fully abandoning the latter. In this respect, Reid-Henry has argued that ‘far from representing a limit upon state violence in the present, human rights [and humanitarianism] in fact move us closer to the ‘emancipation’ of state violence as an instrument of liberal police power’ (Reid-Henry 2015, 626). This then leaves us in a double-bind of either morally isolating state violence and its assaultive character on the displaced and marginalised or virtually emancipating it through humanitarian action that inflicts harm at a slower pace. Ultimately, ‘contests over what counts as violence are intimately entangled with conflicts over who bears the social authority of witness’ (Nixon 2011, 16). Chapter 4 has discussed the role of the Kenyan police in enforcing an occupation regime in Kakuma camp which may indeed have hitherto remained ‘hidden’ from the scholarly gaze but has most certainly been palpable and unconcealed for those affected by it on a daily basis.

This in turn casts the liberal nature of humanitarianism itself in doubt. If the humanitarian project is built on liberal notions of refugee empowerment, economic efficiency, peace-building, democratic participation, and limitations on the direct use of force (Agier 2011; Bulley 2014; Jaji 2012; Lippert 1999) but relies on the capacities of state power to maintain public order through violence, there is an evident slippage between liberal and illiberal visions of government and society. Fiori thus argues that ‘the production of subjects obeisant to the rule of liberal institutions has depended on illiberal and authoritarian methods – not least on the periphery of the world system’ (Fiori 2019, 1). Drawing on Foucault’s notions of delinquency and illegality, refugees

have hence been constructed for a long time as lying somewhere at the edge of liberal government as equivalents to criminal offenders, transgressors, and threats to public welfare (Opitz 2010, 99; Foucault 1995). Receiving states benefit from this coding of refugees as securitised subjects because it unblocks restrictions of liberal governance, while leaving the constant flow of financial, political, and symbolic resources intact and enabling the expansion of state authority into marginalised frontiers and ‘under-policed areas.’ In many ways, this mirrors aspects of policing poor neighbourhoods in the global North that are systemically constructed as being outside the normal rule of law (Mitchell 2010). This in turn accommodates humanitarian organisations and relieves them of responsibility for encampment, threats of camp closure, and heavy-handed enforcement because these nominally fall under the aegis of a sovereign host state. Policing refugee camps illustrates the illiberal disposition of humanitarianism along the world’s imagined periphery.



Figure 24: View from Kakuma 4 Police Post, August 2017 (source: author).



Figure 25: CPPTs and ‘village leaders’ in Kalobeyei, June 2017 (source: author).

Countering reifications of the camp: peopling a political technology

Camp spaces have invited many different interpretations from scholars in geography, anthropology, philosophy, and architecture. Hailey writes that ‘the spaces of camps are both open and closed’ and indicates that ‘far from tautological, this indeterminacy instead specifies the camp environment as spatial field’ (Hailey 2009, 3). While this resonates with the experience of Asfaw and other refugees I met Kakuma, who speak of the camp both as a prison and a university, it also produces a certain unease about the camp reduced to a spatial formation *within*, *against*, or *beyond* which life unfolds. Whereas for Agamben, and scholars championing his work, the camp is ‘the pure, absolute, and impassable biopolitical space’ (Agamben 1998, 72; Edkins 2000; Minca 2006) and quintessential location of sovereign power, others have since productively

reworked the notion of sovereignty in camp spaces as more nuanced, pluricentric and complex (Ramadan 2012). This has subsequently elevated camps from technologies which produce 'bare life' to spaces of insurgency, rebellion, potentiality, and political agency (Sanyal 2011; Rygiel 2012; Martin 2015).

Part of my subjacent argument in this thesis, however, has been that this again presumes (probably unintentionally) a reification of the camp as a spatial technology that encloses, constricts, and hence defines subjects, but is ultimately exceeded by the uncontainable social and political lives it fails to discipline. Painter's thoughts on the reification of the state are instructive in this regard, as for him 'reification represents the state as a thing: a more or less unified entity that can be the subject of actions such as deciding, ruling, punishing, regulating, intervening and waging war' (Painter 2006, 754). Likewise, the reification of the camp as a political technology follows this pattern and has become a foil against which more complex social relations are drawn. Anthropologists have been especially circumspect to foreground the plurality of lives, everyday practices and forms of social order pervading camps to dispose of prescribed legal status, humanitarian categories of aid or tropes of abandonment and suspension as prevailing frames. Turner rightly insists that 'life goes on in camps — albeit a life that is affected by the camp' (Turner 2016, 1). Yet once again, the implicit camp here is a reified spatial technology that has undergone a piecemeal conceptual refinement towards recognising the profusion of activity, dissent, struggles and counter-conducts that flourish within. The conceptual conundrum of reconciling politics of the camp with the repressive repercussions of encampment has hardly been resolved. Feldman explains that,

The humanitarian and political aspects of the camp experience are not utterly opposed. To say that the camp is a humanitarian space does not have to mean

denying or giving up on its political potential, but can in fact serve as a grounds for thinking more precisely about what kind of politics can be conceived from this space, and how it might be able to transform other spaces and other politics. (Feldman 2015, 250)

Similarly, characterising the camp as a political technology or a space of agency and struggle are not opposing assertions. In fact, as I have outlined in Chapter 3, there is no substantive distinction between those forces that exert control *over* human life and the force *of* human life (see Katz, Martin, and Minca 2018, 3) because it is ultimately individual police officers, state officials, and humanitarian bureaucrats who formally administer camps and (more or less successfully) organise, limit, and officially define the camp at the street-level. Although Ramadan concedes that ‘camp-society is not a monolithic body with a single pure identity, but a diverse, dynamic and at times divided assemblage in constant motion’ (Ramadan 2012, 70), the same must be said about the coercive forces which transform it into a political technology. What makes the camp a space of policing and what are the forces behind its limiting effects?

Painter’s writing about the state at large again provides a productive way of countering this reification of camps as well to understand the ‘prosaic practices [that reveal] their heterogeneous, constructed, porous, uneven, processual and relational character (Painter 2006, 754). What I have characterised as the *camp idea* in Chapter 3 has neither essence nor coherence as an entity beyond coordinated but discretionary banal *camp practices* of those enforcing regulations and exclusions at the local level. Policing therefore marks a point of convergence between everyday state power and the camp as mutually reinforcing technologies of ‘care and control’. As opposed to analysing what forms of agency and social life escape *from* or leak *into* the camp, this study illustrates the exigency of systematically *peopling the camp* to understand it not

as a reified entity but rather an assemblage of mundane practices that ultimately give rise to *camp effects*.

Conclusion

This thesis has centred on the policing of the Kakuma refugee camp in north-western Kenya and the multiple articulations of violence, exclusion, and difference which are crucial for comprehending humanitarian governance. I have argued that re-focusing attention upon processes of enforcement in refugee camps brings into clearer visibility the intimate relationships between forces of state power and the aid regime. I contend that it is the ignominious mechanisms of ‘humanitarian enforcement’ that underwrite and sustain aid programmes for refugees, despite appearing fundamentally anathema to the aims and moral aspirations of international protection. In line with scholarship that has lamented the marginality of Africa in political geography – and the fact that ‘geography has a geography to it’ (Myers 2014, 125) – this thesis aimed to contribute to area-specific debates while also strengthening geographical knowledge production focused on the continent. Therefore, it has combined an analysis of regional and local specificity concerning displacement, policing, difference, and Kenya’s postcolonial state with more macrological reflections on the spatiality of global humanitarianism and refugee encampment.

What I have characterised as geographies of humanitarian enforcement are in fact layered combinations of spatial, governmental, and discursive policing practices that produce and entrench the socially detrimental positions of refugees and asylum-seekers as ‘others’ and are used to rationalise and sanction everyday forms of control over their lives. This enriches the existing scholarship on refugee governance with a detailed account of the ways in which postcolonial state power shapes and enforces

the encampment and humanitarian ordering of displaced people. However, through drawing out different facets of policing – which include not only spatial interventions and direct application of kinetic force, but also the enrolment of refugees into policing activities and everyday discourses that reinforce their exclusion – this doctoral study demonstrates that humanitarian enforcement towards refugees is invariably linked to broader trajectories of marginalisation, non-belonging, and subjection in the ‘colonial present’ (Gregory 2004). While this surely echoes policing strategies in marginalised spaces more generally, such as informal settlements of the urban poor, refugee camps embody a unique paradox by which institutional aid in form of food, education, and health services is granted only at the high price of indeterminate spatial exclusion and exposure to often exceptional police powers. Even though the subject positions of the displaced are thus reminiscent of ‘slum’ dwellers, and others categorically disavowed and systematically penalised by the state, refugees are denied even the bare minimum of access and recognition of belonging that a precarious *de jure* citizenship still affords.

Policing in Kakuma operates on a number of different scales. It extends from the militarised camp space as an ‘occupied enclave’, and the strategic constructions of community protection as an arena of intervention and recruitment, to the everyday filigree of the moral lives and bodies of the refugees living within. An exclusive focus on the working of state power, however, remains insufficient for understanding camp policing in all its important facets. This empirical multiplicity – which spans the work of uniformed officers of the state *as well as* a Foucauldian dispersal of surveillance and governmental control throughout society – reaffirms the continuing methodological necessity to analyse the ‘situated messiness of places and the relational networks of power within which they function’ (Ó’Tuathail 2010, 263). As a result, humanitarian enforcement is especially meaningful if understood as a complex and evolving set of

contiguous policing activities that permanently produce and reinforce the symbolic and physical boundaries of the camp space and those who inhabit it. While carving up of space through territorial tactics of occupation may, indeed, be the most visible and (perhaps) visceral articulation of policing in a conventional sense that focuses on state violence (see Chapter 4), there is little doubt that this is simultaneously premised on more inconspicuous practices of exclusion which can ideologically and culturally ground it. Deploring the ostensible lack of alternatives to using brute force in dealing with refugees did not only serve as a simple pretext for Kakuma's police chief – who emphatically maintained the camp was somewhat 'different' from Nairobi and other parts of Kenya – but was emblematic of a widespread socio-spatial rationalisation of violence and enforcement at the territorial margins of the nation-state. Community policing was devised to help mitigate such harsh enforcement practices by providing trainings in democratic governance, human rights, and professional conduct, while ironically enabling ever-increasing securitisations of refugees as a suspect community that ostensibly threatened the security and cohesion of Kenyan society (Chapter 5). The slipperiness of the policing prism has meant that this study often had to move between unsteady scales of everyday enforcement at roadblocks or neighbourhoods, to the superimposed governmental programmes that envisaged community members as willing deputies in enforcing received regulations, and finally into the cultural text of in/exclusion which is neatly woven into the social fabric of the camp. Thus, the discriminatory, gendered, and racialised imputations of 'madness' or sexual deviance of policed populations provide perfect coordinates within which violent enforcement is rendered legible and legitimate, but which are equally being revised in moments of encounter (Chapter 6).

What infuses these geographies of enforcement is by no means a new logic of power, but one that has been nurtured throughout colonial and postcolonial spaces, institutions, and imaginaries until the present day. Notwithstanding, humanitarian enforcement is more than the facsimile of colonial administrations but marries their inclination to authorise human lives only through invocations of difference, order maintenance, and social fixity with a grand moral imaginary of common humanity. This structural criticism has generated contention from some readers that ‘surely some degree of policing is necessary and required’¹⁸⁷ for refugee camps to become viable spaces for thousands of displaced people to live in safety and to access aid. While I recognise the intuitive appeal of this sentiment, it serves the perpetuation of both encampment as a policing technology and vice versa the police as enablers of protracted encampment. The question arises whose safety, security and which order the police are first and foremost defending. Considering the systematic dismantling of refugee-led authorities, that locally administered justice in Kakuma, and their swift replacement with institutionally more agreeable community policing measures, claims about the apparent indispensability of state policing must at least be open for debate. Perhaps broader controversies about the role of the police in society provide avenues for future research on policing displacement and humanitarian operations, whether in or outside of camp spaces. Meanwhile, police abolitionists in the United States have renewed their calls to ‘disband, disempower and disarm’ police institutions altogether on the grounds of their irrecoverable role in maintaining social, racial, and economic inequalities as well as colonial relations of power (McDowell and Fernandez 2018). Without radically transforming society by confronting police power, border regimes, immobilisation, and subjectification, even

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous reviewer comment for journal article, Brankamp 2019, 02.03.2018.

eradicating the physical presence of refugee encampments may not be able to fully abolish 'the camp' as it lingers on in practices of the police.

Despite the deep structural challenges, policing the camp is not a simple story of oppressors and oppressed, citizens and non-citizens, humanitarians and the state, the police and the policed. Instead, the dynamics of enforcement in Kakuma camp are a reminder that policing as a process is as much a matter of controlling space and time, populations and mobility, as of upholding an imagined order of social identities and the boundaries that separate them (Pratten 2017). Even though these boundaries sometimes solidify around the institutionalised power of aid and the state, policing a refugee camp at the territorial margins of Kenyan society also permanently unsettles this order and thus produces new allegiances and practices which complicate notions of sovereign authority, citizenship, and belonging and thereby open up space for 'new cartographies of dis/order' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 9). Humanitarianism as a moral ideology and practice continues to present itself as somewhat aloof from the violent processes of order-making and discrimination which accompany it. A closer look at how order is enforced in camps along the global margins, however, reveals a more sobering picture in which humanitarianism appears as an imperial project of *care and patrol*.

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